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iN HITCH

issue twenty-eight
winter 2001

19 Twisted Christmas Flicks That Yule Go Crazy For / 20
Keep your *Miracle on 34th Street* (especially the remake). Save the talk about what a classic *Scrooge* is. For me, there's no other holiday viewing fare more appropriate than naked girls, serial killers and comic-relief Martians. By Rod Lott.

Mamie Van Doren Confidential: The Legendary Sex Kitten Talks to HITCH / 15
Some men prefer Marilyn Monroe. Other go for Jayne Mansfield. But they're dead, whereas Mamie Van Doren is still alive and well – not to mention sexy, smart and funny, and soon to be seen onscreen getting a sponge bath. By Louis Fowler.

Back from the Shadows for Good: A Visit with The Firesign Theatre / 26
They may have spent their decades-long career wallowing in semi-obscurity, but the four- or five-man comedy act is still around, and poised for their widest exposure ever, with the release of a new album and a PBS special. By Chris Henry.

About the Cover
Get a touch of old-style Hollywood glamour and class with our cover girl, sex symbol and starlet Mamie Van Doren, from her own personal collection. She also sent us a lot of nude shots, but we couldn't put *that* on the cover. ... Could we?

Seek 'n' Find – Win a Prize!

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THAT ROD GUY

UM, SO HERE WE ARE

I never thought I'd say, "Welcome to the first wartime issue of **HITCH**," but, well ... hell, welcome to the first wartime issue of **HITCH**.

If there's ever a time I didn't feel like being funny, these past few weeks since the World Trade Center tragedy have to be it. But I've tried anyway.

It wasn't until the day after the incidents that a line from last issue came back to haunt me. Suddenly, I was reminded we did an interview with the now-unfortunately named band I Am the World Trade Center. My last question in that interview was, "Since you are the World Trade Center, how are you holding up since that bombing several years ago?"

Knowing that the issue hadn't yet appeared on all newsstands, I immediately felt like a heel. But yet, I can't apologize for it. The interview was conducted at least a month before the issue hit, which did so in mid-August.

If I knew what was to come, of course, I wouldn't have asked it. But then again, armed with that info, I also would have been the world's biggest hero.

But I'm not.

STILL NOT SUCKING

Last issue's "Foreign Films That Don't Suck" cover story was such a big hit, readers are asking when we'll do it again. Someday, long from now, when we're short on ideas, I'm sure we will.

In the meantime, check out this issue's "Videos" review section. It's weighted heavily with Asian titles (with an emphasis on Jackie Chan and Jet Li) we wanted to include in the article,

HEAPIN' MAILBAG

HITCH
P.O. Box 23621
Oklahoma City, OK 73123-2621

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

Rod:

While *The Fast and the Furious* was a stupid-ass movie ("Videos," **HITCH** 27), the reason I liked it better than the *Gone in 60 Seconds* remake was that it didn't have the glossy, manipulative sheen of that movie. Also, I think the car chases were better because they weren't CGI and they were in daylight, as opposed to everything in *60* being so dark you couldn't see the cars. *60* was just typical button-pushing Bruckheimer. *FNF* was far more ridiculous and cheap.

But it needed nudity and some breakdancing. Did you notice how they obviously redubbed some of the dialog to get a PG-13? They probably cut out the boobies, too. I want to see more cheap crazy sloppy movies.

The worst thing about it was the cop subplot. I'm so sick of this. It would have been much cooler if he would have become a truck-jacker and his driving skills and white-boy good looks allow them to team up with the Mexicans and truck-jack a convoy of heavily armed redneck truckers.

Picture that: The Mexican gang and Vin's ethnicially ambiguous hoods in Japped-out Civics with machine guns and spear guns, and enraged. pill-popping redneck truckers with shotguns and switchblades. Lots of carnage. The guy who gets hung up gets his arm ripped off and pulled into the wheel well of the semi, splattering blood and gore on Vin, who is trying to save him. Then Vin could make his Hulk-like facial expressions of sadness.

Then after they steal all the DVD players and tie up the truckers leaving them to rot in the desert, they go back to Race Wars and beat all the Japs at the races. Vin beats up the head Jap and Vin's guys win all of the Japs' cars. They kick the Japs out and make them walk home across the desert. Then they have a big party in the desert and girls take off their shirts. Everyone is drinking Corona. They put the corpse of the armless guy (that died in the truck-jacking) in his car and light it on fire. His burning car and corpse make a big bonfire.

Vin says, "You're one of us now."

Whitey says, "So does that mean it's okay for me to fuck your sister?"

Vin: "Knock her up and I'll rip off your testicles."

Vin's girlfriend says, "Remember you said we could go to Mexico." Vin checks his cash, makes sure his stack of $100s is still there. Vin says, "Let's go!"

Then they all get in their cars, rev up their engines and start racing across the desert. In the background is the big fire and the party. Then as the credits come on, that Limp Bizkit "Rolling" song starts playing.

Ed Donovan
Burbank, CA

FOREIGN FILMS FEEDBACK

Hi Rod,

Keep up the good work. I have a few complaints/comments/suggestions for you!

1) Please work on getting more sampler CDs out to your readers. Since you turned me on to Emperor Norton and Astralwerks Records, my eyes have been opened to a new, wonderful world of music. (DJ Me DJ You rules, rocks, kicks ass – choose your cliché).

2) For Louis Fowler to dis Bjork, *Dancer in the Dark* and *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* in the same issue ("5 Foreign Films That Do Suck Oh-So-Bad," **HITCH** 27) was almost more than I could stand. Then he calls *Dead Alive* "the greatest zombie film ever made"!!??!!? C'mon, I know opinions are like assholes, but Louis needs to wipe his a little better 'cause it sure stinks!

Robert Cook
River Ridge, CA

Hey Rod!

Keep up the good work on **HITCH**. I particularly liked your "Foreign Films That Don't Suck." You're one of the few people I've

read yet that enjoyed Jet Li's *Black Mask* as much as I did.

Rev. Keith A. Gordon
reverendk@mondogordo.com

THE USUAL

Rod:

I was just reading Richard York's article about the Apex DVD player ("DVDemented!," **HITCH** 26). When I was shopping for a VCD-compatible player, it was down to that and the Pioneer DV-333, which is what I settled on. Everything I read about the Apex said it was, as you say, "a Chinese-made piece of crap." (That *vcd-help.com* site helped me decide.) But you can't turn off region coding on the DV-333, so I can't watch stuff like the *Ultraviolet* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* series sets from the UK. Or Hong Kong shit, or anything else from outside our great nation. Region coding is evil.

I do have a ReplayTV, though, and you can record DVDs to it and then dump them to tape. Bypasses the Macrovision. (The model I have does, anyway. Replay itself has stopped making them, and I don't think the Showstopper models that Panasonic makes can do that.) But yeah, usually if I like a DVD enough to copy it, I'll just go ahead and get it.

So let's hear it for persnickety DVD nerds. And boy, are you right about movie theaters. They let people bring in cell phones, but I can't have my flamethrower? Fuck them.

HITCH is cracking me up, man. A buddy of mine is a big Julie Strain fan, so I pointed him to the site.

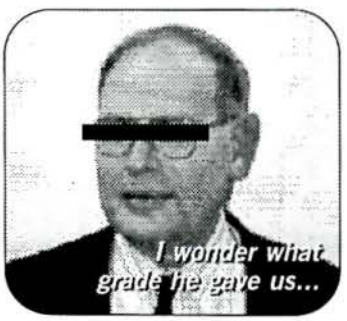
Sean Medlock
Indianapolis, IN

Hey –

Today for some comic relief during our busy website redesign, I passed around your "Accounting for Dummies" article from back in '99 (**HITCH** 21). Just for fun, I decided to look for Clayton State College on the web – the fated college where poor Prof. George Crawford teaches accounting. Mabye I did it because the story is so good I had to validate its truth; maybe just because I'm bored. Either way, I came across faculty listings, *complete with photos.*

Behold, George Crawford, professor, e-mail victim, risqué accounting mentor: *http://business.clayton.edu/crawford/*

Denise Goluboff
Austin, Texas



Hi Rod:

I received my copy of **HITCH** 26 this week. Awesome – off the beaten path! A very interesting read. That "Devil's Music" story was great. Please tell Mr. Murg that when played backwards, the intro to Orgy's song "Mr. Crowley" says, "You laughed at sin." Did they ever find the lead singer to Black Oak Arkansas? That would make for a cool story. Keep up the great work!

Rick Sell
Miami

Hi there…

Just got the latest **HITCH**; gonna cost me lots as usual. I usually wind up buying about 90 percent of your music reviewed.

P.S.: To let someone print a bad review of *Farm Pulp* ("Print," **HITCH** 27) and with my initials yet … boo hiss. I still think *Farm Pulp* is the best read in America. Taste. Ain't it a bitch.

Larry Farber
Sweden

Rod

Re, the fall issue:

So, what about *Babette's Feast*?!

It's Pichu that's constipated – not Wobbuffet.

Only ran across 2 spelling errors and one transposition this issue. Things are looking up. (I transposed the Os in "looking" for ironie's sake, or would that be "irony's" – oh well – enough ink on that).

Jack Easterly
Oklahoma City

AND YOU WROTE ME WHY?

Hi,

I am looking for a place to order more of those Hard Hat Harry videos. My nephew loves them. He wants the monster truck and a few others. How do I go about ordering them. The last order I had was a special for 15 videos of Hard Hat Harry. They are really good for kids. Thank you.

Sharon Pettigrew
Shushu31@home.com

Dear Madam or Sir,

I am 15 years old and try to enter the *Guinness Book of World Records* with the world's biggest collection of newspaper or magazines promotion articles (pens/stickers/mouse-pads…,), well anything that bears your name. I like to thank you in advance for any kind of contribution.

Peter Hakenberg
Germany

RLott:

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digncom@hanmail.net

SUBS & WHATNOT

Rod,

After Andy Sidaris (**HITCH** 25) and Julie Strain (**HITCH** 26), I have to do it – here's $16 for a four-issue sub.

Gerald Tilley
Urbana, IL

Rod,

In my crush of bills, I forgot to pay the one that I most needed to pay. Hopefully, this large check will serve as an adequate apology. Thank goodness you still update your website at least infrequently, or I might have missed out on the joy of **HITCH** 27 altogether! Now please send me **HITCH** 27. I desperately need to know which foreign films don't suck.

Brian Lundmark
Norman, OK

but simply couldn't view in time for inclusion.

ARMCHAIR UPDATE

For those few of you who've asked about the progress on the still-in-the-planning-stages **HITCH** video review book – tentatively titled *The* **HITCH** *Armchair Video Companion* – it's still in the planning stages.

But my current thinking is get **HITCH** 30 under my belt, then do the book. Because what sense would it make to have 29 issues' worth of reviews in a book? None, that's what.

EVERYBODY IN THE POOL!

As the cover so proudly boasts, yep, there's a freebie in this issue. And whether you're a subscriber or not, *everybody* gets one!

The enclosed *Adult Swim* CD features 10 songs from Cartoon Network's new late-night block of adult programming, which includes *Space Ghost Coast to Coast, Aqua Teen Hunger Force, Sealab 2021, Harvey Birdman, Attorney-at-Law* and the anime import *Cowboy Bebop.*

Don't forget to pop the disc into your computer for the interactive portion, which includes generous clips and information from all the shows. And quite honestly, these are very entertaining shows. Imagine writing a script drunk off your ass and having that first pass animated and broadcast nationwide; that's what many of them come off like.

Our thanks to Cartoon Network's Greg Heanue for supplying us with the CDs. It is our hope that this fine nation soon will be singing "Kick Your Ass" in perfect harmony because of his efforts.

FIXINS

Heaven 17. Vivian Kubrick. That is all.

See you in the spring. Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and all that!

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HITCH

#28 • WINTER 2001

"The truth is, I practice absurdity quite religiously." —*Alfred Hitchcock*
"Freedom of speech is one thing; the word 'penis' is another." —*Phil Hartman*
"Comedy is not pretty." —*Steve Martin*

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OVERSTATEMENT OF THE MONTH

"Commanding major mega-dollars per film, Chris Tucker is one of the funniest comics around. His voice and animated face are impressed upon the American psyche."

—press materials for Rush Hour 2

UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE MONTH

"The main trouble with Hollywood is that the guys you have to pitch to are all business school grads. They like to go out and have a pitcher of margaritas, shoot some hoops, have a few brewskis, high-five each other, and drive home and fuck some whores, you know? They want you to be able to explain the entire film in one or two sentences. And if it's about a guy fucking an apple pie, then you're home free."

—Ghost World *director Terry Zwigoff*

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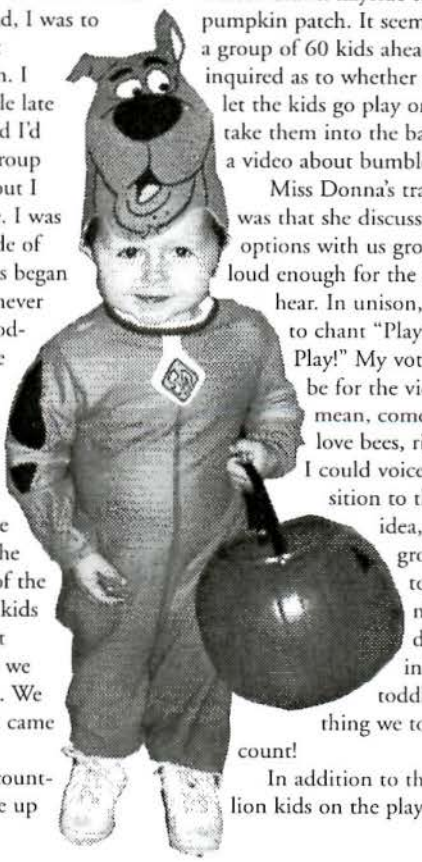
Pumpkin Junction, what's your function?

Our annual trek to the pumpkin patch was a little different this year. Normally, my wife and I load up the kids, head to "Pumpkin Junction," and enjoy a few quiet hours there as a family unit. This year, however, we agreed to *assist* in taking our son's Mother's Day Out group on a field trip to "Pumpkin Junction."

The group consisted of 17 kids, aged 2 to 5. Also in tow were a few other well-meaning but foolhardy parents.

Fortunately, a scheduling snafu made my attendance of the "Let's get all 17 kids into the van and secured into their car seats" ritual impossible. Instead, I was to meet the group at Pumpkin Junction. I was running a little late and was concerned I'd miss out on the group hayride. It turns out I beat the van there. I was standing at the side of the van as the kids began to pour out. I've never seen that many bodies inside a vehicle since that time I saw the now clichéd "clowns in the car" routine at the circus.

Once all of the kids were out of the van, I asked one of the adults how many kids we had. She didn't know. I suggested we take a head count. We both counted and came up with different results. We both counted again and came up with different results. We agreed to use my number of 17. The stress of what we were about to undertake suddenly hit me like one of those boulders that Wile E. Coyote always manages to get crushed by.



I looked out over the Pumpkin Junction grounds, and saw approximately five million kids who were the same age as the 17 we were about to unleash (I assume it was 17; again, that's just the number we agreed to use). The Play Group director, Miss Donna, then announced that there was going to be a 20-minute wait before our group would be whisked away on a tractor-drawn hayride to the actual pumpkin patch. It seems there was a group of 60 kids ahead of us. She inquired as to whether we should let the kids go play or we should take them into the barn to watch a video about bumblebees.

Miss Donna's tragic mistake was that she discussed these options with us grown-ups loud enough for the kids to hear. In unison, they began to chant "Play! Play! Play!" My vote was gonna be for the video. I mean, come on. Kids love bees, right? Before I could voice my opposition to the playing idea, our entire group of kids took off running and disappeared into a sea of toddlers. Good thing we took a head count!

In addition to the five million kids on the playground, there were swings, teeter-totters, slides and a merry-go-round. I saw some kids on the merry-go-round spinning much faster than they should have been. An older kid kept the darn thing rotating at the speed of light. The kids that were on the thing and holding on for dear life didn't look that all that merry.

We eventually found our son, Taylor, and his friend and sometime-nemesis, Billy, attempting to mount a couple of swings. We helped them up and began to push them. A kid in a red shirt who was with another group kept walking in front of the swings. Several times he almost got hit. Then it happened. This red-shirted kid pushed his luck too far and stepped in front of Taylor's now high-flying legs and got kicked square on the jaw and was knocked to his ass. He immediately sprang to his feet and ran to an adult who was nearby. The adult grabbed him up as the kid kept crying. The kid was wildly gesturing and pointing to Taylor. This red-shirted kid will more than likely grow up to be a litigious adult. His mom is probably the lady that's suing McDonald's because a hot pickle fell off of her hamburger and onto her chin.

The only other mishap on the playground was when Taylor got off the teeter-totter, holding his crotch and crying uncontrollably. The adult women who were present, were perplexed as to what the problem might be. I picked him up and gave him a knowing hug and said, "That hurt, didn't it?" Taylor could only nod in agreement as he continued to cry.

While watching the kids ▸▸

Pumpkin Junction (continued)

play, I observed a pair of twin boys. They couldn't have been much over four years of age. Both of the boys were wearing wristwatches. This struck me as really, really odd. Why on earth could kids of this age need a timepiece at their disposal? "Damn. Is it 11 o'clock already?" I imagined them saying. "I've got to be at the sand pit by 11:15. I've gotta get the hell out of here. See ya!"

Miss Donna found me and gave me a set of keys. "You're in charge of the keys to the van."

"Cool. I'm the designated driver!" I joked.

Miss Donna did not appreciate the joke. She told me that we needed to get the kids gathered up and meet over near the barn for the hayride. Then we were told to climb onto the tractor-drawn trailer for the hayride. We all got seated and waited for the fun to begin.

Taylor's friend Billy bullied his way between me and my son. He put his hand on mine and said he was having fun. He sat as close to me as he could without actually being on my lap. Miss Donna noticed this and said to me, "He craves male attention," in a "He doesn't have father at home" tone of voice. I thought this was sweet, but hoped he'd stop craving male attention by the time he's ready to date.

About this time, the tractor started up, blowing black smoke all over the place. The kids' faces lit up. The ride began. I've never seen kids so excited to be traveling at approximately three miles per hour. About two minutes later, the tractor grinded to a halt. We were smack dab in the middle of the pumpkin patch! The tractor driver dismounted from his spring seat and announced, "Everyone gets one pumpkin and one gord!" As he pointed to various parts of the pumpkin patch, he went on to explain that we could select our pumpkins from "Over there, over there or over there, but NOT OVER THERE!"

Miss Donna led the charge into the pumpkin patch. Miss Donna is a woman of, well, large stature. At least two gords that I saw succumbed to her massive weight.

Back on the tractor, we were dropped off near some picnic tables where we were to have lunch. We feasted like kings on peanut butter sandwiches (two for me, please!), Goldfish crackers and raisins. Also provided were the requisite juice boxes.

The luncheon proved to be the most uncomfortable part of the day for me. Seated across the table from me was Dave, a recruiting supervisor for the United States Air Force. He was decked out in his camos and boots. I don't know how he knew, but he asked "So, you're a cop?"

I really hate conversing about my career with other adults. I am always bombarded with stories of when they got pulled over for speeding or asked if I know Officer Insert-Name-Here. I acknowledged to him that I was.

"Really. In Wichita?" he asked.

"Yep. Right here in Wichita," I answered, short.

"You probably know Officer Bryant then," said Dave.

"No. I don't think I know him," I replied.

"Really. He works third shift. Out east, I think."

"No. I don't think I know him. There's about 500 officers in Wichita," I explained.

"Hmph," he said, obviously confused that I don't know all 500.

One of the other adults who was sitting to my left started in.

"You said you are a cop?"

"Yes," I answered politely.

"You probably know my husband," she said.

"Is he a police officer?" I asked.

"No. He works security at K-mart," she replied.

"I don't think I've met him."

With this, I excused myself and went to find some of the kids that had run off. I found most of them over near the animal cages. Pumpkin Junction is not just about pumpkins, my friend. They also have animals crudely locked up in cages for visitors to gawk at. They have goats, chickens, a llama and even some turkeys!

All of the animals were pretty much your run-of-the-mill barnyard animal, except for one of the chickens. Instead of having normal feathers, it had fluffy feathers. It was the weirdest thing I have ever seen. It was like a poodle with a beak. In one of the cages was a small pony. A sign warned, "Don't put your hands near my mouth. I can bite!" In front of the cage was a 6-year-old girl who had appointed herself as the pony expert.

"That pony will bite you," she said to me as I approached. "Ponies can bite! Keep your hands away from the pony's mouth!"

I was approached by Miss Donna, who said it was time to round up the kids. Prior to leaving, she wanted to get all the kids together for a group shot. I was adamantly against this idea. Ever try to get even *one* kid to sit still long enough to have his photo taken? Try getting 17 of 'em – again, just an estimate – to cooperate for a group shot.

Nonetheless, the kids were thrown together in a haphazard manner and photos were taken. Miss Donna then announced it was time to get the kids loaded up into the van and head out. I had wisely volunteered earlier to put all the kids' pumpkins in the back of my Jeep. As soon as the kids were gathered, I told Miss Donna that I was gonna head on back to the church. I told her that I'd have the pumpkins and gords unloaded by the time they got back. That way the kids could just grab their pumpkins and gords and could be on their way. She agreed, and I headed out as quickly as I could.

Once the van pulled into the church and the kids got out, Miss Donna allowed them to collect their pumpkins and gords. She also gave them all a necklace fashioned out of yarn and orange construction paper. Dangling on the yarn was a pumpkin that said "Pumpkin Award. Presented for having fun!"

Ironically, I didn't get one.

—*Ken Davis*

- "SAME-DAY CLEANING SERVICE ON YOUR FINE FURS"
- "COOL CATS RULE THE SCHOOL"

EVEN MORE THINGS WE'D LIKE TO SEE DISAPPEAR FROM THE MOVIES ALTOGETHER

- Scenes in which a person has an inordinate number of answering machine messages from the same caller.
- Scenes in which a cell phone rings in a group of people and everyone thinks it's theirs.
- Endings that feature a wedding, with virtually every cast member present, accounted for and joyously happy.
- The use of the Gary Glitter song "Rock 'n' Roll (Part II)."
- Talking animals.

ALTERNATE TITLES FOR ANNE HECHE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY, *CALL ME CRAZY*

- *Call Me Desperate*
- *Call Me* Fucking *Crazy*
- *Call Me Washed-Up*
- *Call Me Straight, Now Call Me Gay – Wait, Now Call Me Straight Again*
- *Call Me with a Job, Please?*
- *Hey, Remember Me? I Was in* Volcano*!*

- *Call Me Ook-in-Lok-Aw-Chee-Ca*
- *Call Me* So *Over*
- *Just Call Me, Okay?*

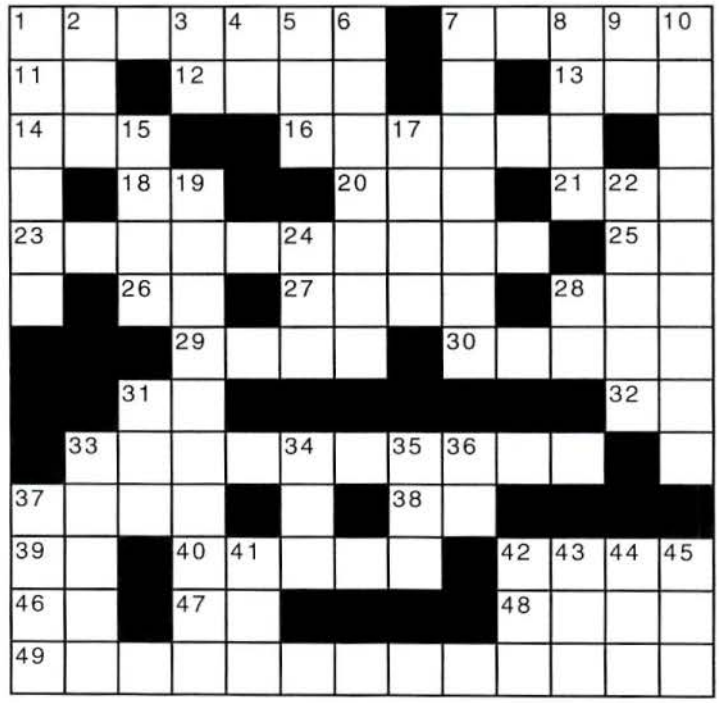
THINGS YOU HEAR AT CHUCK E. CHEESE'S THAT SOUND SEXUALLY SUGGESTIVE, BUT AREN'T

- "Is that a roll of tokens in your pocket?"
- "Do you want to put it in?"
- "How 'bout a romp in the ballpit?"
- "Push the button to make it go faster."
- "You have to have money to play, little boy."
- "When the head pops out, I want to you whack it."
- "It's powered by hydraulics, you know."

SONGS THAT WOULD DRIVE THE TALIBAN CRAZY, IF ONLY THEY HAD TO HEAR THEM AS OFTEN AS WE DO

- "Always Forever," Donna Lewis
- "Runaway Train," Soul Asylum
- "Torn," Natalie Imbruglia
- "Life Is a Highway," Tom Cochrane
- "Bitch," Meredith Brooks
- "Superman," Five for Fighting
- "No Rain," Blind Melon
- "Love Shack," The B-52's
- "Stay," Lisa Loeb and Nine Stories
- anything by matchbox twenty
- "You Keep Me Hangin' On," Kim Wilde

The HITCH *Crossword*



Across

1 Topical metal band
7 One of TV's longest-running unfunny sitcoms
11 Coppola's got it, and not in the good context
12 State of Heche's career
13 Promisary note, to dyslexic
14 See 12 Across
16 Word I used to kick my wife's ass in Scrabble last weekend
18 Idjit abbrev.?
20 Tigger, to his homies
21 Coppola likes to
23 What Michael Jackson's new album is and *isn't*
25 The safest Jet
26 Coltrane utterance
27 How a moron spells "antsy"
28 A tired form of rock
29 Pauly Shore's last hit
30 How Hollywood gets an original idea
31 It's IE. You're welcome
32 This one said it, but she said it, too
33 *Good God, who in the hell still watches this crap?!?*
37 They'll fight for your rights
38 Middle part of e-mail address
39 Shivering saying
40 The horror genre's latest Dogg
42 What those who saw *Don't Say a Word* will tell you it is
46 Heche, presumably
47 Half a laff
48 Sweet sandwich
49 What Tom Sizemore's marriage to Heidi Fleiss will bring him

Down

1 Brain tumor? Hell, who knew Sharon Stone even had this?
2 Half a Teletubby appliance
3 Despite marriage, J-Lo remains one
4 *Lost in America*'s unsung star
5 A gimme: AEJ. Thank me later
6 What everyone hopes the stolen Spears-Timberlake video has
7 Coppola does it
8 How many *good* movies Sandra Bullock has made, post-*Speed*?
9 Joe's military title
10 What the hick on *Survivor 3* sure can't go without
15 VCR for the incredibly lazy
17 They're in Pam's chest and in Goodman's stomach
19 This season's *other* shocking tragedy
22 Not my god
24 Yes, Sammy could
28 Worst job in advertising (abbrev.)
31 What *From Hell* made me
33 This fall's crop of films
34 The cow says...
35 Halle Berry descriptor
36 Hart's home
37 Four rich Swedes
41 I sure could use one
42 The worst kind of blow
43 Acronym for some big-shot organization, I'd bet
44 Skinny German cartoon dog
45 Just above this line

ANSWERS ON PG. 11

If Celebs Were Made of Swiss Cheese

Anthony Michael-Hall *Linda Fiorentino* *Jerry Orbach*

Holiday Gifts from Hell

For the humor-impaired conformist.
All words limited to single syllables for ease of use.

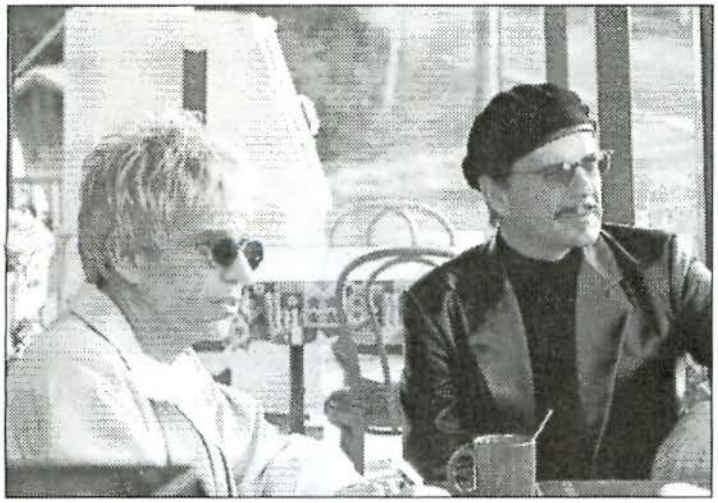
When plain ol' hooch just doesn't express your true feelings.

Wacky Fart Phone
Real Phone That Farts Instead Of Rings!

Free "Calvin Peeing" truck window sticker with every order!

Must prove total unemployability to order this item.

Random Movie Still of the Month



Elton John and Bono – er, Billy Bob Thornton and Bruce Willis star in MGM's comedy, Bandits.

HITCH *Paparazzi*

Overdue for a name change, are we?

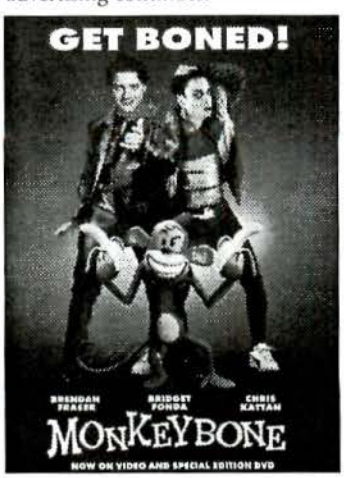
HITCH Condensed Books

This Month: *TV Babylon II* by Jeff Rovin (1991, Signet)

(Kristy McNichols' female lover) went public with details about their love life, describing Kristy's fantasies about Bo Derek, and telling how, the first time they made love, "She started growling and barking like a dog. She then began biting me." ... (John Travolta) said he was a big man of (male porn star) Paul Barresi, and asked him to dinner. That night, after giving each other massages, Barresi says the two became lovers. "I love to watch Burt Reynolds movies and fanta-size," Travolta allegedly told Barresi.

Phallus in Wonderland

Our examination of the use of phallic imagery in contemporary advertising continues.

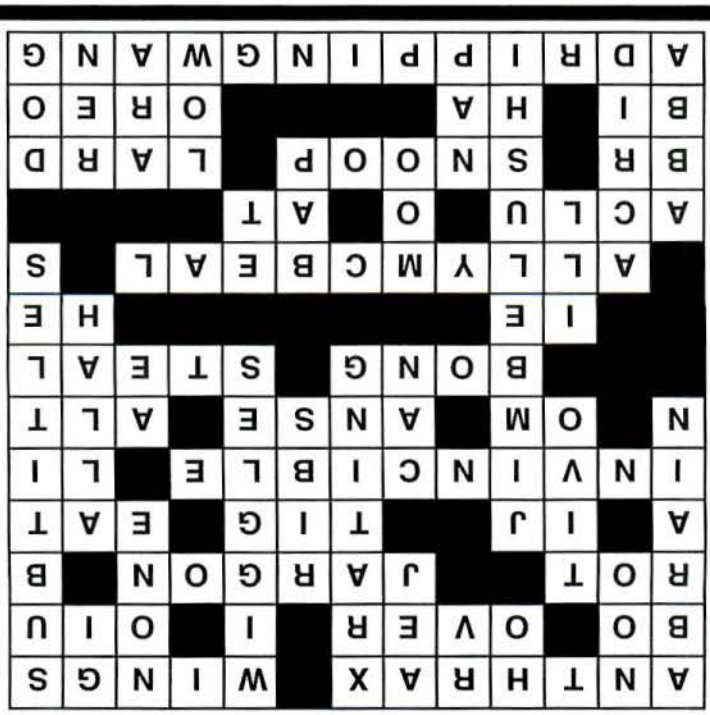


And for once, absolutely *no explanation whatsoever* is needed.

Even more mistaken-identity instant-messaging madness

Katkmu1: hey bud
Katkmu1: i got the house; closing date is november 2
Katkmu1: yuo gotta come out there fishin
Katkmu1: r u there??????????????????
RLott: Yes, I'm here. What kind of fish?
Katkmu1: redfish
Katkmu1: especially, i think
Katkmu1: they have a hatchery for them there
RLott: Any sturgeon?
Katkmu1: what is that
RLott: Duh - a fish.
Katkmu1: probly. went appliance shopping yesterday
RLott: How about groupe?
Katkmu1: and got a ridearwound lawnmower too
Katkmu1: groupe, yes
Katkmu1: flounder
RLott: Save the mower stories; I want to know about fish.
RLott: Catfish?
Katkmu1: they got it all there, bud
Katkmu1: BIG catfish
RLott: Whitefish?
Katkmu1: gonna cost me $6k for new flooring. fresh whitefish comes in every day in rockport
RLott: Flooring schmorring — spill the beans on the fish.
RLott: You got tuna?
Katkmu1: we got a guest bedroom tuna and sailfish too
Katkmu1: maybe shark :(
RLott: Unless the guest bed is for the fish, I don't wanna hear it.
RLott: Sharks, huh? Cool. Any whales?
Katkmu1: guest bed is for you, silly
Katkmu1: no whales; we are in the bay
RLott: No whales? Darn it.
Katkmu1: dolphins
Katkmu1: all over the place
RLott: Dolphins will do. I'd love to snag one of those.
Katkmu1: gotta go to new england for that
Katkmu1: against the law to snag dolphins, asshole
RLott: Darn it! That's two strikes now.
Katkmu1: you working?
RLott: No, I'm talking fish.
Katkmu1: so come fishin
Katkmu1: seriously, come see my new house soon
Katkmu1: i have a 100' dock for you to tie up to
Katkmu1: you got a boat?
RLott: I'm thinking about it. You got any bait?
Katkmu1: bait shops are all over the island
Katkmu1: you got a boat?
Katkmu1: longer than 100'?
RLott: We can save $ there because I hit a cow yesterday. It would make excellent bait, chum, what-not.
Katkmu1: pishaw
Katkmu1: no boat, huh
RLott: No boat.
Katkmu1: buy one there
Katkmu1: and tie up to my fancy ass dock
RLott: Are you kidding? I gotta front end to fix! You ever hit a cow?
Katkmu1: no; you're serious
RLott: Serious as a sturgeon.
Katkmu1: that wasnt very nice
RLott: Which part?
Katkmu1: killing the cow
RLott: A speeding car. A hairpin turn. A cow in the road. You do the math.

—Rod Lott

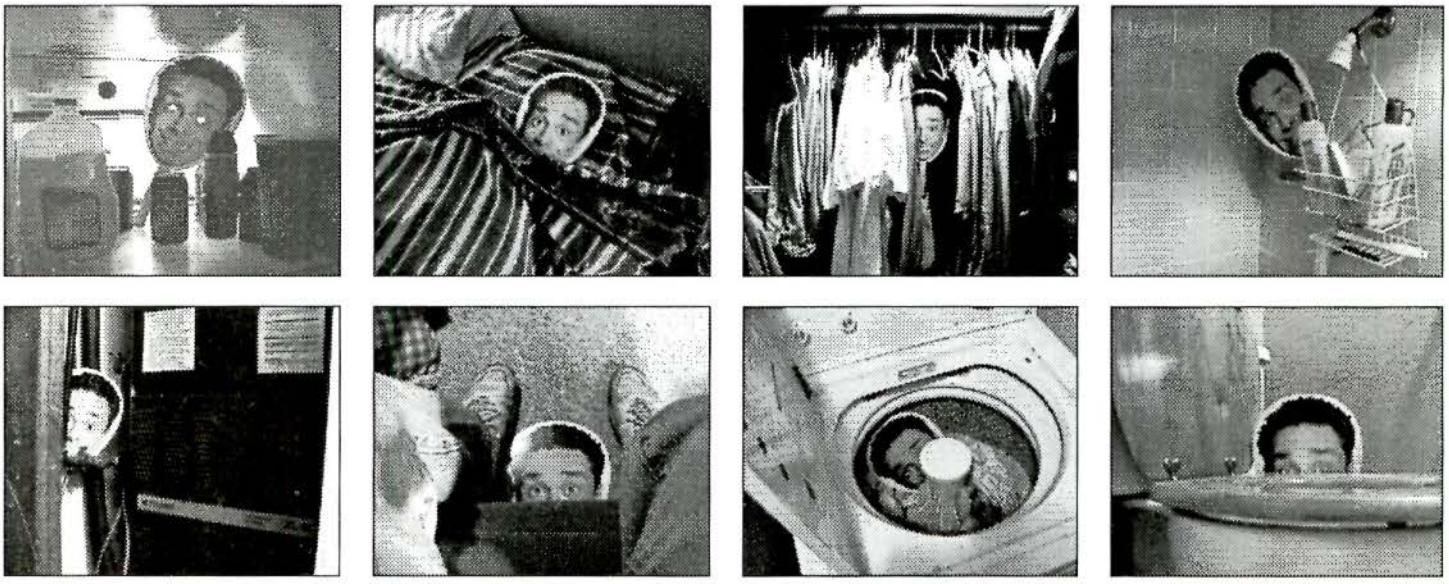


The Robert Goulet
DEATH WATCH

"I'm gonna die when I'm 88; I got it all planned. I think 88's a good time to go and see the Lord. What the hell?"

Approximately 20 years and 11 months remaining

Who is Corky Romano and why is he haunting my house?



Tom Neesnan's Belated Movie Reviews

(Ed. Note: Tom's back!)

Arachnophobia
(1990)
Rating: 9 1/2 out of 10

Now ol' Tom is not one to try an startle folks, but I do like to see folks enjoy good films. That is my dilemma! And boy, it is a doozie of a scare picture! So I will submit to you a warning: ***DO NOT SEE THIS FILM IF YOU HAVE A FEAR OF SPIDERS!!!***

Okay! Now I will tell you about one of the greatest films ever! This film starring the fat man from *All in the Family* is about a town that gets invaded by a spider brought back from a land far, far away, and spreads mayhem by making more spiders! (Ol' Tom won't use certain words here with young readers! Hello, young readers, how are you?) Once many spiders are attacking the poor folks in the town, the man from *All in the Family* comes in, and gives a fight that is a real good fight! There are parts of this film that are very fun to watch, and they make you wonder, "Just how did they do that?" Well, that is the magic of movies. So see this one; it is great!

The Land Before Time
(1988)
Rating: 9 1/2 out of 10

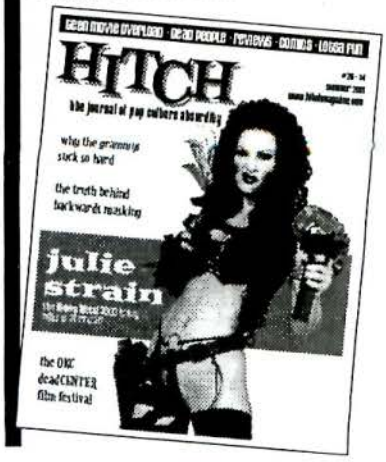
Ol' Tom has seen a lot of films, and seen a lot of days. This film is a good one for sure, and is about a time long, long ago. A time well before ol' Tom was born (at least I hope so ... hee-hee-hee!) and discusses what things might have been like back then. And the film does it through the magic of cartoons!!! Yes, this movie is all with no real people in it, only drawings! I did not know that going in, and when I first saw the movie on the screen, ol' Tom thought to himself, "Wow, this is a cartoon movie!" After that, I was able to enjoy a film that was very, very good! I won't tell you too much about the film, so as not to spoil it, but I will tell you that there is one part where a bird-dinosaur gets on top of a big, meat-eating monster of a dinosaur and boy, you get your money's worth in that scene alone! Go see this film! Before your theater becomes a land after the time of this film showing!

The Doctor
(1991)
Rating: 9 1/2 out of 10

For those of you who think going to the doctor is a bad thing, hear this: *Not anymore!* It is now *good* to go to *The Doctor!* I am talking about the film that is called *The Doctor*, of course! This is a very fine film, probably better than a lot of other films that have been made so far! It is about some doctors that get to learn what it is like to be patients, and boy, does it ever try their patience! But it will not try yours, because the film is good. However, don't let that hold you back from getting popcorn for the film, as it adds to the excitement, as always! Sorry about talking about that; back to the review: The film is well-acted, as the man from *Broadcast Time* stars, and delivers all of his lines very well! He sure had a lot to memorize, as he says a lot of things, all of which are really good to hear! See this film!

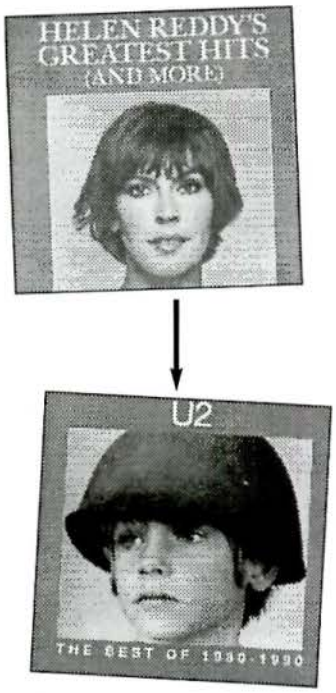
Looking for back issues?

Many are sold out, but we still have copies of the following issues for sale: #7, #8, #9, #10, #15, #23, #24, #25, #26 and #27. Issues are $4 each. Some are in extremely limited quantities, so please e-mail us at *RLott@aol.com* to reserve. Consult *www.hitchmagazine.com* for contents of each issue. Also see our ad on pg. 30 of this issue.



Double Takes

Bandits logo vs. *Ransom* logo



Helen Reddy's Greatest Hits vs. *U2's Greatest Hits*

HITCH film critic Harrison Lott vs. kid on the curling iron warning

The Paper

PART FIVE OF A CONTINUING SAGA

DATELINE: July 28, 1993

I had now been assistant editor of this godforsaken weekly community paper for one whole month. But truthfully, it felt like six.

I was in need of a break (if not an altogether new job), but had no vacation time to speak of. That didn't matter. I decided to take a week off, simply by telling my editor, Lee, that I had won a writing fellowship to a week-long creative workshop held by the Sundance Institute.

This, of course, was code for "I'm taking my girlfriend to the Grand Canyon."

And with Lee pushing 80, of course, he bought it.

To hold the fort in my absence – after all, I did practically the entire thing myself – I called upon my friend and fellow journalism graduate Rob Collins to fill my shoes for a week. I knew he would do a great job. (And he did; they ended up hiring him on while I was gone.)

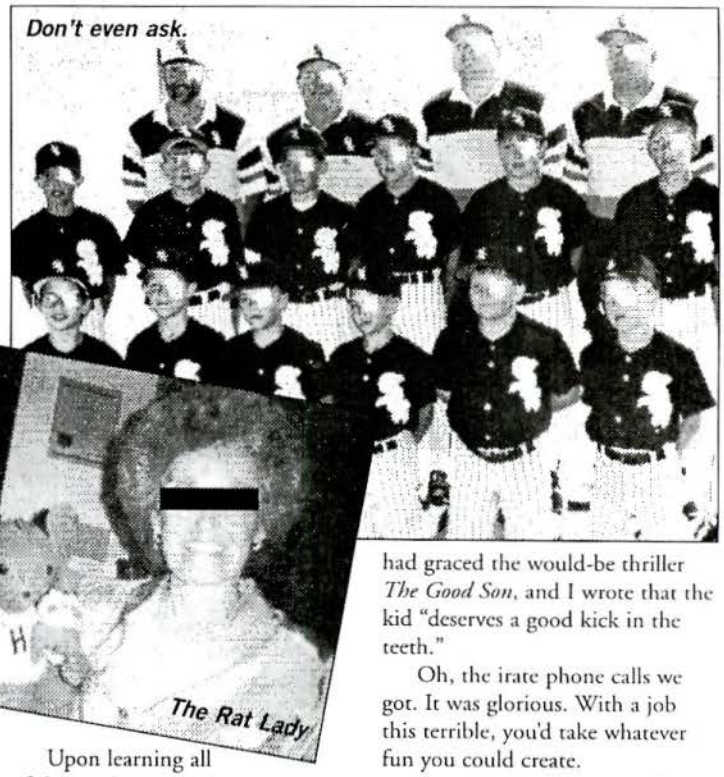
My main story in that week's issue – bumped to page 3 so Lee could fill 40 percent of the front page with a photo of a Little League team all wearing eyepatches – concerned a local woman named Jean who wrote and published her own books of historical fiction starring a family of rats.

This naturally led to the lead, "When it comes to learning about American history, Jean says, 'Rats!'"

I know, I know. I didn't say I was proud of it.

Jean had written and illustrated *Hiram and the Rattales*, in which a clan of rats living in a barn in south Oklahoma encounter Christopher Columbus, Lewis and Clark and even the big guy, Jesus Christ Himself. Not being much of a – how you say, *scholar?* – Jean had culled all her historical facts from *The World Book Encyclopedia*.

But that's not the disturbing part. Nope, Jean had made stuffed animals of all her little rat characters. I mean, her house was *filled* with them. Sure enough, she wanted to pose with them for the photograph that accompanied the article, and that was that.



Upon learning all of this, Rob bestowed her with the nickname of "The Rat Lady." It stuck, because we would not see the last of Jean.

Once the article was published, she'd drop into the office like she was our new best friend. We couldn't shake her. (Eventually, she weaseled her way into getting her own column, but more on that in future issues.)

My other big story was a review of Bette Midler's new film, *Hocus Pocus*. However, not being able to bring myself to actually see it (even for free), I spent the entire review skewering Bette, her career and her co-star, the equally unfunny Kathy Najimy.

It was fun. It was even more fun when it promoted a long letter from an angry reader practically demanding I take back everything I had written.

I had so much fun with that reaction that I vowed to decimate films and their stars as much as I could. This reached an apex later that season when Macaulay Culkin had graced the would-be thriller *The Good Son*, and I wrote that the kid "deserves a good kick in the teeth."

Oh, the irate phone calls we got. It was glorious. With a job this terrible, you'd take whatever fun you could create.

Because any newspaper whose headlines that week included "Rotary governor here Friday," "Coach Al's brisket a champ," "10 here enlist in Navy," "Workers comp a topic," "Bowling scores" and "Bag grass clippings? 'No!' says OSU" was not a place that was swimming in fun.

So when the next issue called for a story on a local beauty pageant queen, Rob and I selected the most cleaving-revealing photos we could find of the girl and ran them half a page deep. Lee certainly didn't mind.

—Rod Lott

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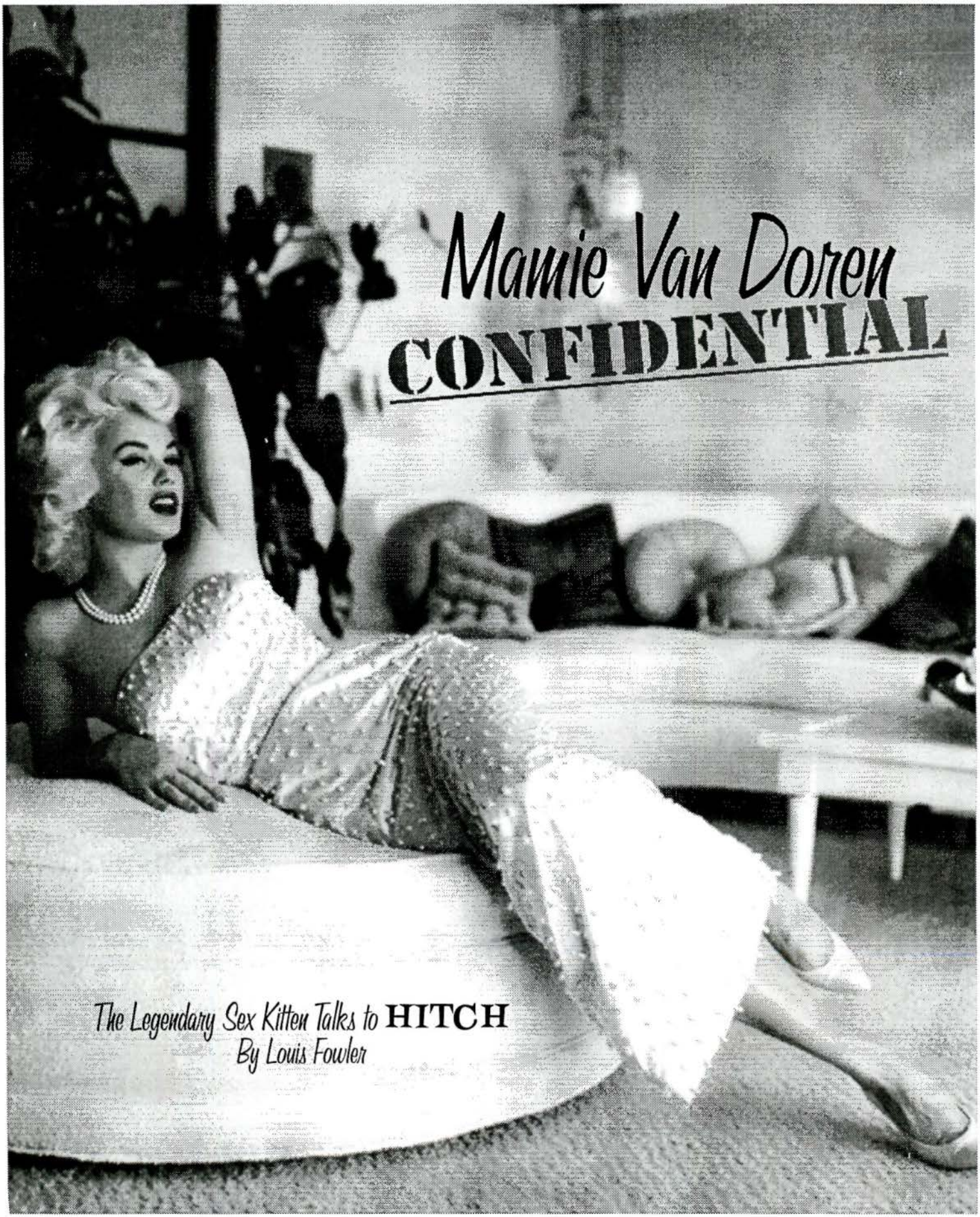


Mamie Van Doren CONFIDENTIAL

The Legendary Sex Kitten Talks to **HITCH**

By Louis Fowler

In the early- to mid-'80s, weekend television on UHF channels was really a sight to behold. Afternoon programming would have fun themes like "Kung-Fu Theater" or they would show old horror films with the local Elvira-rip-off artist. And remember, this was back before liking B-films was cool and accepted by the mainstream. Usually, the films were cheap to purchase and, of course, it would please the kids. It pleased me every weekend.

It was on a Dallas station in 1987 that I first saw Mamie Van Doren one Saturday afternoon. It was a horror double-header and *The Day of the Triffids* had just ended. Next up was *The Navy vs. The Night Monsters.* I kicked back in the recliner next to my father and sat quietly chewing on my Tootsie Roll, content to watch acid-spurting, goofy plant monsters attack said Navy. When you're a kid, it really doesn't get any better than that.

But when I look back on it now, the *Night Monsters* weren't the only thing I noticed in that film – I also noticed a platinum blonde, buxom beauty whose name I was too young to remember, but whose visage was one that would leave an indelible impression on me.

That woman was Mamie Van Doren, one of the most iconic women to come out of the 1950s and 1960s. In films such as *High School Confidential, Sex Kittens Go to College, Girls Town* and *Untamed Youth*, Mamie epitomized the rebellious rock and roll girl – she's beautiful, she's bad and she's got a mind of her own. She can rock with the boys as well as leave them with their tongues hanging out.

It was through these films that Mamie earned her status as a pop-culture queen, and deservedly so. She has outlasted both Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield, and with good reason: To me, Marilyn was far too unattainable and Jayne came off as an ice-queen. But Mamie was easily the girl you wished lived next door to you. She was sweet, down-to-earth and, unlike Marilyn, it was easy to see that Mamie was no dummy; she had a brain behind those eyes. Mamie could play elegant or she could play the vixen; she could be sweet as honey or as dangerous as a pit bull.

Mamie was, and still is, the quintessential B-movie queen – if anything, she invented the title.

Mamie Van Doren began making films in the early '50s, starring in such movies as *Two Tickets to Broadway, Hawaiian Nights, Ain't Misbehavin'* and the *Mr. Ed* precursor *Francis Joins the WACS*, featuring Francis the Talking Mule.

Her first film that she would be remembered for was 1957's *Untamed Youth* ("My personal favorite," she said), for which she was touted in advertisements as "the girl built like a platinum powerhouse!" Other classic roles followed in the aforementioned Albert Zugsmith productions *High School Confidential* and *Sex Kittens Go to College*, in which Mamie is the sexiest science department head since ... well, *anyone.*

In the '60s, Mamie concentrated more on comedies, such as *The Private Lives of Adam and Eve, Las Vegas Hillbillies* and *3 Nuts in Search of a Bolt.* In 1968, she was Moana in what she calls her worst film, *Voyage to the Planet of Prehistoric Women.*

"On that film," she said, "I picked up a check and wiggled my ass to the bank."

In the past few years, Mamie has gone on to become the ultimate pin-up girl for a simpler time when gals were innocent and rock and roll was king. She has been rediscovered by a whole new generation, from girls who mimic her bombshell, rockabilly look to psychotronic-film fanatics eager for something fun to watch.

When talking to Mamie, the first thing that draws one in is her immediate warmth. You learn that the sweetness she projected on the screen was no act. She's open, she's fun and above all, she's as cool as you'd expect someone like her to be.

I spoke with Mamie from her Newport Beach, Calif. home one Friday afternoon as she was getting ready to head off to the gym.

Julie Strain

On that film, I picked up a check and wiggled my ass to the bank.

HITCH: The first movie I saw of yours was when I was 8 or 9 years old – *The Navy vs. the Night Monsters.* That's a fun, fun movie.

Van Doren: Yeah, it's a cult movie. I enjoyed doing that one. God, to be remembered when someone's 8 years old ... that's nice.

HITCH: So let me ask you this question: What is it like to be a living legend?

Van Doren: Put the "living" in and you've got it right there! I'm real happy to be alive, considering all the other contemporaries are not here. *There must be a reason.* I never really considered myself a living legend, but if they call Madonna a legend from the '80s, I guess they must have really called me a legend.

I never even thought about it, really. But it's nice to be here and healthy and still in the Hollywood scene. And of course my best friend is Julie Strain. I love her to death.

HITCH: You are one of the big three sex symbols of the 20th century. How does it feel to have outlasted both Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield?

Van Doren: Great. I appreciate life probably more than anybody in the world at this moment. Jayne got killed and Marilyn ... Marilyn I always felt was murdered. I felt like I didn't have long to live.

I went to Vietnam to entertain the troops. I did everything I could to see if I was going to hang around, and I realized everyone else was trying to hang around, and I was trying to self-destruct, I guess.

But I am so happy I went over there because I made a lot of guys happy, and I'm still getting responses back and I'm always getting e-mail from guys who were in Vietnam. The kids just loved it. I took a chance and no one else did.

HITCH: You're more beautiful today than ever. What's your secret?

Van Doren: Oh, well, thank you! I think it all comes internal. It's kind of how your attitude is towards life. And genetics ... genetics that are passed down, and luckily, I had parents and grandparents that really stayed young. My grandmother always stayed young. They never had an elderly look to them. It was just incredible. My mother just always looked so young and beautiful, up until the day she died. I look at her and I try to follow in her footsteps.

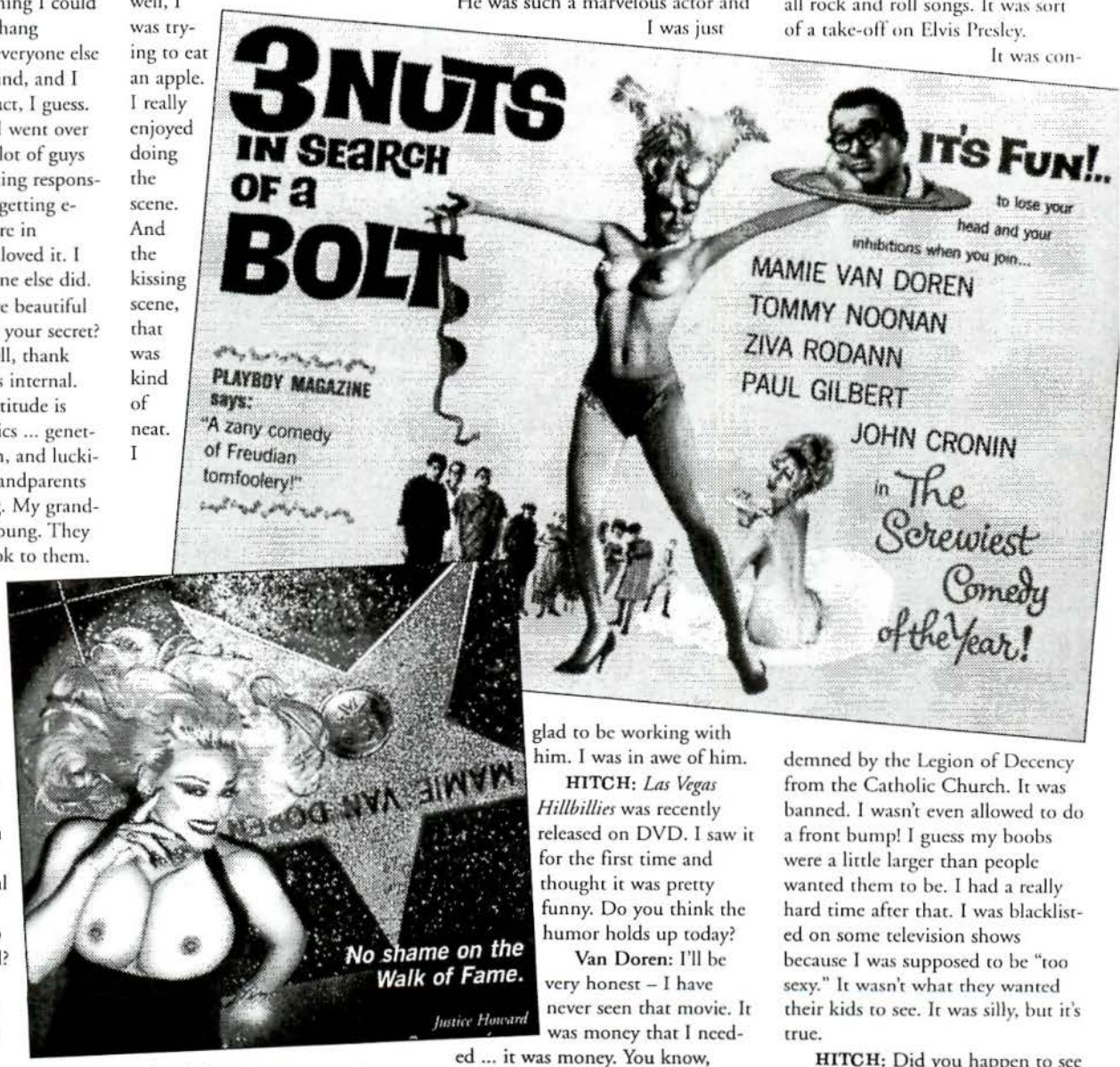
HITCH: Arguably, your most popular film is *High School Confidential.* When you were making the film, did you realize the social ramifications it would have, such as helping to popularize rock and roll?

Van Doren: No, I had no idea. It was just another movie that was just a little ahead of its time.

Albert Zugsmith, who was the producer – I worked once with him at Universal and he was one of the first indie producers to go out on his own. When he went to MGM, I just got back from Italy when he called. He said he had this role for me in *High School Confidential* and I said, "Sure." They gave me the script, and the rest is history.

I had no idea. All I knew is that it was about somebody smoking pot, and I read the script and I thought it was kind of a lightweight. But you know, today, you can look at it and laugh. You can get stoned and laugh at it. It's very funny. But in those days, it was like, "Oh, my God!"

I look at this scene quite a few times, with Russ Tamblyn, the kitchen scene, eating an apple – well, I was trying to eat an apple. I really enjoyed doing the scene. And the kissing scene, that was kind of neat. I enjoyed that. It was very early in the morning.


3 NUTS IN SEARCH OF a BOLT
PLAYBOY MAGAZINE says:
"A zany comedy of Freudian tomfoolery!"
IT'S FUN!..
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MAMIE VAN DOREN
TOMMY NOONAN
ZIVA RODANN
PAUL GILBERT
JOHN CRONIN
in The Screwiest Comedy of the Year!
No shame on the Walk of Fame.
Justice Howard

HITCH: How does it feel now that these films are being rediscovered by a new generation?

Van Doren: Flattered!

HITCH: How was Clark Gable to work with in the film *Teacher's Pet*?

Van Doren: Awesome. He was one of the finest actors I ever worked with. It was a treat. He was married and he played it cool, but he had a roaming eye. He was very ... well, he was "all man," shall I say.

God, he was almost 60 years old when I worked with him and I was probably 23 or 24. It's hard to believe, when I look back on it, that I worked with a man that old. The difference in the age, I didn't even think about how old he was. He was such a marvelous actor and I was just glad to be working with him. I was in awe of him.

HITCH: *Las Vegas Hillbillies* was recently released on DVD. I saw it for the first time and thought it was pretty funny. Do you think the humor holds up today?

Van Doren: I'll be very honest – I have never seen that movie. It was money that I needed ... it was money. You know, making a fast dollar. A lot of actors do that. But when I look back on it, I loved Ferlin Husky. He was so natural and I had that one kissing scene in the end and it ... it was quite nice.

I think that the film was nice. It was fast and full of heart and that naiveté that we tried to put into all of our movies. I think really, people want an escape. For its day, it was pretty funny. There were other movies that Jayne and I had both done – but not together – that I think were better.

HITCH: Like *Untamed Youth*?

Van Doren: That's my favorite movie. I was the first gal to do rock and roll on the big screen! Eddie Cochran wrote the songs, I danced – sort of like the MTV videos – and then I recorded for Castle Records. And the songs, they were all rock and roll songs. It was sort of a take-off on Elvis Presley.

It was condemned by the Legion of Decency from the Catholic Church. It was banned. I wasn't even allowed to do a front bump! I guess my boobs were a little larger than people wanted them to be. I had a really hard time after that. I was blacklisted on some television shows because I was supposed to be "too sexy." It wasn't what they wanted their kids to see. It was silly, but it's true.

HITCH: Did you happen to see *Mystery Science Theater 3000*'s take on *Girls Town*?

Van Doren: No! That's great! I wish I had known about it. No one ever calls me and tells me I'm on anything unless I look bad or something. They say, "Do you want to see yourself?" and I say, "No, I don't want to see myself!"

HITCH: I hear you're a regular at the Playboy mansion.

Van Doren: Oh, yeah, I go up there all the time. I go to the main parties. That's how I met Julie. Hef had me on the cover of *Playboy* in '64 and I've been in *Playboy* several times. So I've got a ticket up there. I feel like I've paid my dues to go up there.

The parties aren't raunchy at all. I don't know what raunchy is, but there's no live sexual orgies or *ménage á trois* or whatever going on. Hell, if there was, I'd stay!

HITCH: Who are some current actresses that you've noticed have that true "sex symbol" quality that you had?

Van Doren: You know, I always like to look at pretty women on the screen, but it seems like they have the acting ability, but they don't have that magic. A look, a feeling inside that doesn't come through. It's different from the women in my era; they just aren't the same. They are not as, I can't say feminine, but ... some of them are really beautiful, but it's something that's more than that. It's something that you're born with. It's God-given. I haven't seen that. I haven't seen anyone, even at the Playboy mansion, and there are so many beautiful girls up there, but yet I have not seen that "diamond."

You can spot a beautiful woman and get a feel that maybe there is that possibility. But then you start talking to her and it doesn't go much further. A lot of these girls just don't have the opportunity that I had because of the studio system and the studio heads. There's no studios that get behind you with a buildup and put you in movies one after another. I mean, it's not the same. So it's very hard for someone to make it on the big screen.

On television, you see a lot of actresses. I don't know how they do it. I really don't. There is so much to learn in one week. They do one thing, then they do another. That's very difficult. They have to memorize the lines, they have their own character, they're doing themselves, I guess. As for me, I don't know whether I could do something like that. I get bored very easily. Working on the same set, working with the same actors – I'd go crazy! I have to have a different set everyday, and a different guy. I've never been able to settle for one. I'm very different. I always thought they were different, but my husband tells me, "No, Mamie, you're different." I'll go along with that.

HITCH: Well, it seems that women today are built like young boys compared with the women from your era.

Van Doren: They're more athletic. They're in better condition really than women in my time. They work out, they run and they enhance themselves, which, you know, we never had. We were never able to do that; we didn't have things like that. We had to be agile, or you're out of luck.

These girls are nice and thin, but they have these huge breasts, and it doesn't seem like it goes together. I'm very tiny and I have large breasts, but you can tell when someone's natural and someone isn't. I don't put anybody down for doing it, but there is a price to pay for doing it, and they don't know that. Everything has a price afterwards.

HITCH: Why do you think even today men would still go for that '50/'60s-type of woman?

Van Doren: I think girls in my era were more vulnerable. They expected a man to open the door for them – the kind of old-fashioned things they don't do now. Women are really upsetting; you can't even open the door for them. You can't even open a door for them now or they get upset. You know, "I'm not helpless, I can open a door!" It's little things like that, the girls that want to be independent.

The movies today, the girls are doing karate and they're beating up men. It's kind of silly. I don't really go to those movies, anyway. It's okay if that's what you want to be.

HITCH: Why is it important

for you to have a website?

Van Doren: I want people to see it through the eyes of Mamie, instead of through the eyes of someone else. I put it out there, because when I'm gone, someone's gonna put something out there and so I'm putting everything out there so they know the truth. That way nobody will come and say things ... well, they will, but the truth is here. I'm just letting it all hang out now.

(*Rushmore*) gives me a sponge bath. It's a funny scene in a hospital – a sponge bath.

Jason was very cool; he's a very good actor. He reminds me of a young Dustin Hoffman. He's so good. He's such a fine actor. It's hard to find somebody that young and talented. Working with him was fun because, you know, here's this young guy that's enjoying massaging my breasts with a sponge. I do like that.

Working with him was fun because, you know, here's a young guy enjoying massaging my breasts with a sponge.

It's really something that I want to do. I feel like if a woman wants to take her clothes off at my age, that's great. And if guys want to look at it, that's fine. You know, whatever they want to do to see me. I'm here to please.

HITCH: What does a member of your *mamievandoren.com* website get?

Van Doren: If you were to go in, you're seeing more of me, more of me carrying on nude and doing things that are more outrageous. I learned that from Julie, but I think Julie learned that from me. I'm being a little kiddish, but I don't think kids should see it. At one time, I didn't have a members' section; it was all for free. I thought, "Jesus, I'd better cool it," so I decided to put a membership up so I could do more of what I wanted to do. I love doing things like that. *I love it. I'm drawn to things like* that. I love being sexy.

HITCH: What is your newest film, *The Best and the Brightest*, about?

Van Doren: It hasn't come out yet. Sony is releasing it. I talked to the director and he said it was supposed to be out in September, but it hasn't come out yet. Maybe there were some problems. It's a young picture; it's young and different. It's got all the young kids. I play a whore in it. Jason Schwartzman

The film's new name is *Slackers*. They had a private showing in New York and they said that I got ... I don't like to brag, but they said my scene was the best. I have a cameo role in it and they enjoyed my scene. They said they got more comments on me. And it was the first character role in my entire life, my first character. I never thought I'd live long enough to do that. It was quite an event for me.

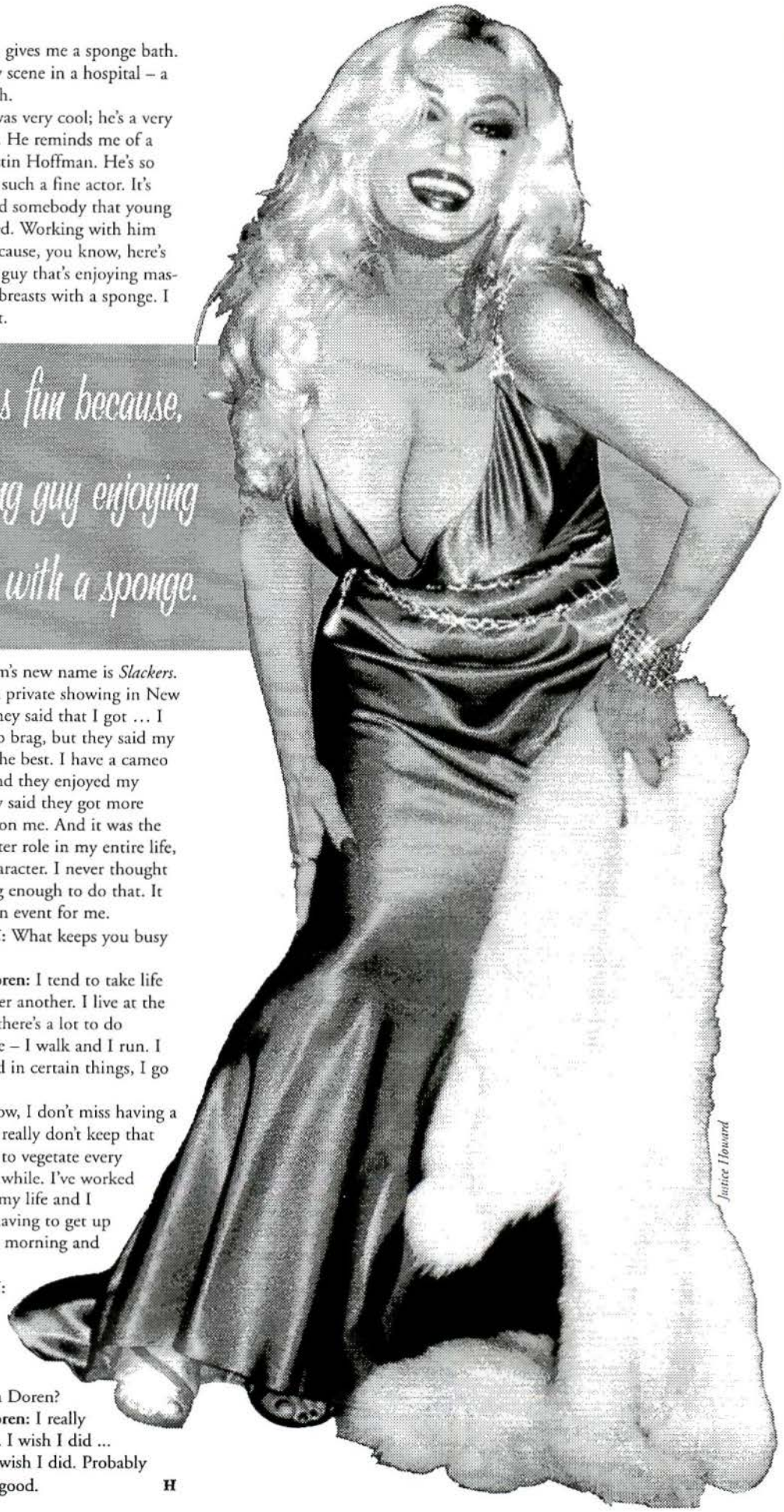
HITCH: What keeps you busy today?

Van Doren: I tend to take life one day after another. I live at the beach and there's a lot to do around here – I walk and I run. I get involved in certain things, I go to parties.

You know, I don't miss having a lot to do. I really don't keep that busy. I like to vegetate every once and a while. I've worked so hard all my life and I enjoy not having to get up early in the morning and work.

HITCH: So finally, tell me: What is up next for Mamie Van Doren?

Van Doren: I really don't know. I wish I did ... no, I don't wish I did. Probably something good. **H**



Justice Howard

19 TWISTED CHRISTMAS FLICKS THAT YULE GO CRAZY FOR

BY ROD LOTT

If you're like the average American, you'll likely spend some time this holiday season curled up to the cathode rays of *It's a Wonderful Life, A Christmas Story* or *Miracle on 34th St.*

But as a **HITCH** reader, you're an above-average American. So why not deck those halls with Christmas-themed viewing fare that's more spiked than spirited?

We'll get you well on your merry little way...

BLACK CHRISTMAS (1974)

'Tis the Season: To be freaky. Before Bob Clark directed *A Christmas Story*, he did its polar opposite, one of the earliest slasher films, complete with a killer hiding in a sorority house. The maniac breaks into the Kappa house just before Christmas break and takes refuge in the attic, emerging now and then to kill a girl. On top of this, the girls are terrorized further by a series of graphic telephone calls.

This Movie Gave to Me: A case of the shivers, because the mysterious phone calls are disturbingly unintelligible.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Certainly not the killer, who's never shown or named, only adding to the film's unsettling feeling.

THE CHRISTMAS MARTIAN (1971)

'Tis the Season: To be spacey. An alien crash-lands in Canada, but quickly finds help and goodwill with the local kids (albeit after bribing them with candy). The fearful parents plot to kill him, but – being a kid's movie and all – you know they'll come around.

This Movie Gave to Me: How do you say "upset stomach" in French?

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: *Lots* of subtitles. Christmas martians speak French!

CHRISTMAS TIME IN A BROTHEL (1976)

'Tis the Season: To be slutty. Also titled *Holiday Hookers* for American TV airings, this Italian sex "comedy" offers the entirely nauseating combination of purchased sex and Ernest Borgnine.

This Movie Gave to Me: Crabs, I'm sure.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: I repeat: the entirely nauseating combination of purchased sex and Ernest Borgnine.

DON'T OPEN 'TIL CHRISTMAS (1985)

'Tis the Season: To be gory. In jolly Londontown, a serial killer offs anyone wearing a Santa suit, with two Scotland Yard detectives on the trail. Much blood is shed in this UK film.

This Movie Gave to Me: More fuel for Caroline Munro fantasies.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: One Santa gets loses his chestnuts.

JACK FROST (1997)

'Tis the Season: To be silly. Not to be confused with Michael Keaton's kid-friendly dead-snowman movie – but oh, what if it were! – this *Jack* is a comedic horror picture in which the killer is a slow-moving, sadistic cousin of Frosty. On the eve of a serial killer's execution, his prison transfer van collides with a chemical truck. The resulting leak alters his DNA, which logically turns him into a bloodthirsty snowman. You laugh, but this shit *could* happen!

Among his crimes: decapitating a boy with a sled blade, pinning another to the wall with icicles shot from his hands and following it all up with the even stupider *Jack Frost 2: Revenge of the Mutant Killer Snowman* (2000).

This Movie Gave to Me: An even deeper appreciation for Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead 2*, which this flick wants desperately to be – and fails.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: *American Pie* hussy Shannon Elizabeth, being beaten to a bloody pulp by Jack in the bathtub.

LUCKY STIFF (1988)

'Tis the Season: To be fatty. Goofy fat guy Joe Alaskey actually believes that *Bosom Buddies* vixen Donna Dixon (hey, that rhymes!) is in love with him. She takes him home for the holidays to meet the family, not realizing they're cannibals and want to eat him for Christmas dinner. Directed by Anthony Perkins, who did better with *Psycho III*.

This Movie Gave to Me: Countless stupid fat jokes.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Donna Dixon in stirrup pants!

NAKED CHRISTMAS (1996)

'Tis the Season: To be naked. This totally gratuitous video has four "scream queens" from the cast of *Santa Claws* (see below) strip, gyrate, bump and grind to the sounds of stock music, all draped in a Christmas-y background. For one whole hour.

This Movie Gave to Me: Four ho's a-ho'ing.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Wall-to-wall boobies. But in the spirit of Christmas.

SANTA AND THE ICE CREAM BUNNY (1972)

'Tis the Season: To be nonsensical. Santa and his sleigh get stuck in the sand of a beach, so he telepathically summons a horde of local kids to aid him. One by one, the tykes literally drag in farm animals – a cow, a sheep, a horse – to try and pull the sleigh, but to no avail. The gorilla might have worked, if only Santa got off his fat ass and pitched in.

Giving up, Santa tells the kids a story. Cue the film *Thumbelina*, shown in its excruciating entirety. Inspired, the kids to call for the help of the mythical Ice Cream Bunny (the *what?!*), who rides in on a fire engine, yet bears no frozen treats. Santa is freed.

This Movie Gave to Me: A hankering for ice cream … and large doses of caffeine.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Thumbelina nurtures a near-dead bird and escapes from spiders, only to be trapped in a loveless relationship with a mole named "Mr. Digger."

SANTA CLAUS (1960)

'Tis the Season: To be disturbing. Enterprising American schlockmeister K. Gordon Murray was famous for importing a slew of nonsensical Mexican children's *peliculas*, but this bizarre musical fantasy made some serious coin.

Santa wages an all-out war against the Puck-ish Satan himself, while still finding time to brighten the lives of even the most poverty-stricken of children – namely, the waif Lupita, who refuses to get on Mephistopheles' side. Even if you've seen it relentlessly skewered on *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, it *still* doesn't make any sense!

This Saturday-matinee *Santa* proved so successful, Murray followed with several cut-and-paste variations: *Santa Claus and His Helpers* (1964), *Santa's Magic Kingdom* (1966), *Santa's Enchanted Village* (1966) and *Santa's Fantasy Fair* (1969).

This Movie Gave to Me: Assurance that the embodiment of all the world's evil can be soundly defeated by a mythical character.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Every racial stereotype on display and reinforced for the benefit of its impressionable young viewers.

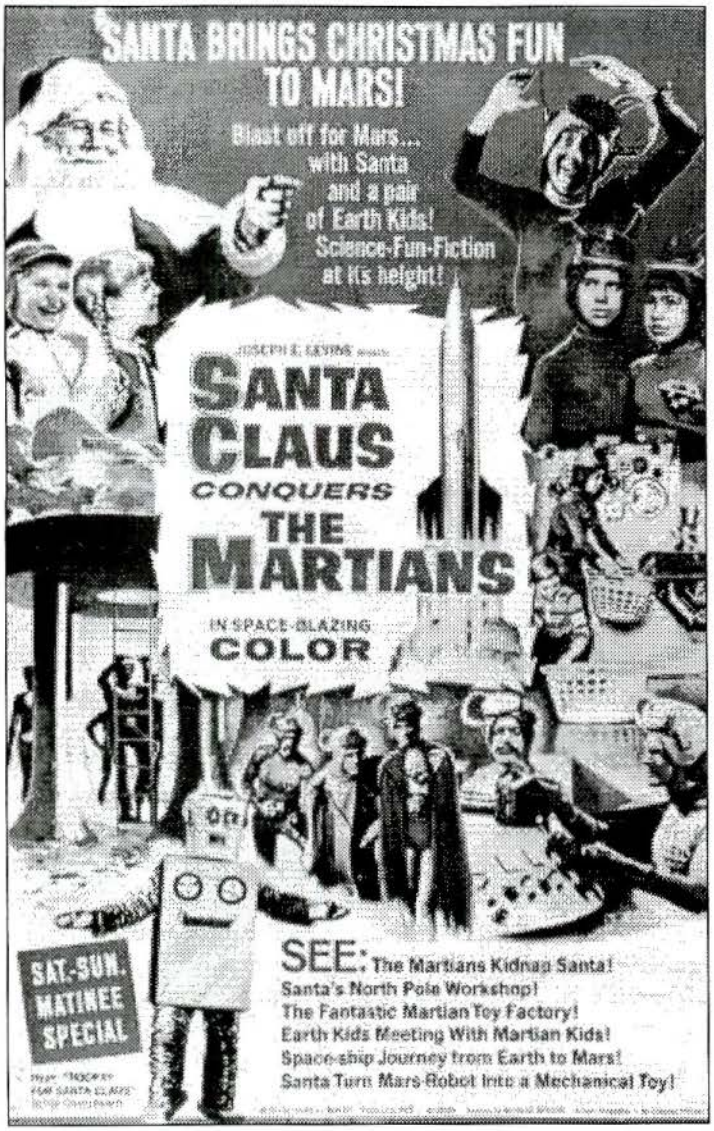
SANTA CLAUS CONQUERS THE MARTIANS (1964)

'Tis the Season: To be Zadora-rific! This legendary flick – often pegged as one of the all-time worst – has Martians kidnap Santa after spying on Earth children and seeing how much fun Christmas is. Santa hardly puts up a fight, escapes death and teaches the Martians the true meaning of Christmas.

Satan attempts to alter Lupita's undying allegiance to Santa Claus.

This Movie Gave to Me: The Christmas song to end all Christmas songs: the theme that screams *"S-A-N-T-Y, C-L-A-U-S / Hooray for Santy Claus!"* God bless you, Milton DeLugg, wherever you are.

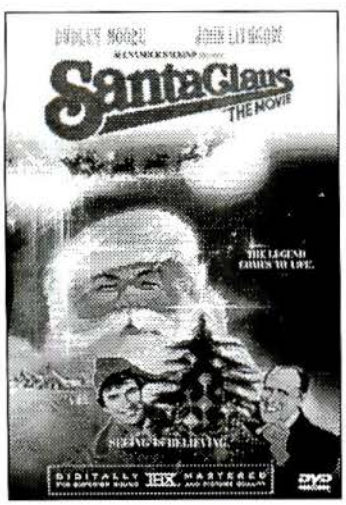
And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: A very young Pia Zadora co-stars as a Martian child – undoubtedly, the finest role of


SANTA BRINGS CHRISTMAS FUN TO MARS!
Blast off for Mars... with Santa and a pair of Earth Kids! Science-Fun-Fiction at its height!
SANTA CLAUS CONQUERS THE MARTIANS
IN SPACE-BLAZING COLOR
SAT.-SUN. MATINEE SPECIAL
SEE: The Martians Kidnap Santa!
Santa's North Pole Workshop!
The Fantastic Martian Toy Factory!
Earth Kids Meeting With Martian Kids!
Space-ship Journey from Earth to Mars!
Santa Turn Mars-Robot Into a Mechanical Toy!

her illustrious career.

SANTA CLAUS: THE MOVIE (1985)

'Tis the Season: To be turkey. One of the decade's biggest bombs, this epic proves the Salkinds should've stuck to producing *Supermans*. Then fully into his career downslide, Dudley Moore stars as Patch the Elf (despite the film's title suggesting otherwise), an enterprising yet bumbling Santa helper who breaks ties with his employer in a huff and joins the dark side, in form of a Grinch-y toy tycoon, essayed by John Lithgow, overacting as usual.



This Movie Gave to Me: A solid reason to hate the Salkinds' *Supergirl* just a wee bit less.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Did they just put glass inside a teddy bear? *In a children's film?* Yep, they did.

SANTA CLAWS (1996)

'Tis the Season: To be sleazy. Debbie Rochon is menaced by a stalker, who dresses up like Santa and kills people with a claw. Santa, claws – get it? Lots of women get naked, solely for the purpose of getting naked. This one was written and directed by John Russo, best known as one-half of the acrimonious creative duo behind the horror classic *Night of the Living Dead.*

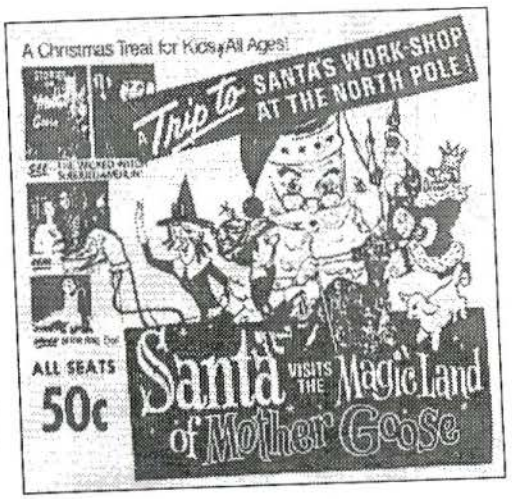
This Movie Gave to Me: Further proof that Romero was the genius.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Well, an oft-naked Rochon sure didn't hurt.

SANTA VISITS THE MAGIC LAND OF MOTHER GOOSE (1965)

'Tis the Season: To be boring. Despite being directed by "godfather of gore" H.G. Lewis (*Blood Feast*), this low-*low*-budget entry – apparently filmed on a high-school stage, this one is a patience-tester.

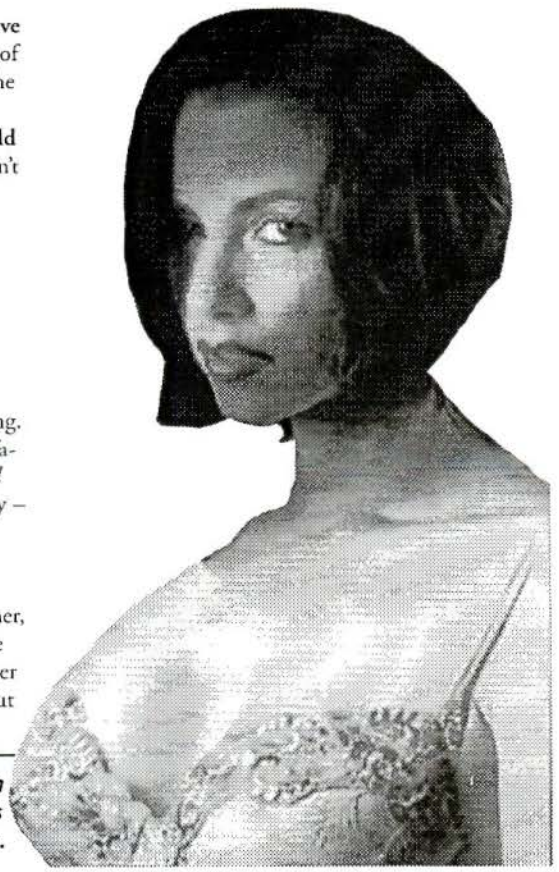
The title's a bit of a misnomer, as Santa doesn't really "visit" the so-called "magic land," but rather sits on his fat ass and reads about it in a book. As the story goes, Merlin the magician lets a slew of storybook characters out of an oversized Mother Goose volume, including a rag doll named Raggedy Ann and a ghost named Casper, portrayed by a Kleenex on a string. A mean old witch appears to make things miserable, until Merlin does some tricks, some horrid songs are sung and Merlin does some more tricks. Come to think


A Christmas Treat for Kids & All Ages!
A Trip to SANTA'S WORK-SHOP AT THE NORTH POLE!
ALL SEATS 50c
Santa VISITS THE Magic Land of Mother Goose

of it, Merlin runs fucking *rings* around Santa.

This Movie Gave to Me: The necessary lack of stimulation for a good nap.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Are you kidding? 'Twas a struggle just to keep them open.



***Debbie Rochon, into whom St. Nick wishes to sink his* Santa Claws.**

SANTA WITH MUSCLES (1996)

'Tis the Season: To be Hulky. In another dubious entry in pro wrestler Terry "Hulk" Hogan's entirely dubious motion picture career (*Mr. Nanny*, *Suburban Commando*), Hulk plays a Scrooge-esque fitness guru changes his ways when he gets hit on the head, and sets out to save an orphanage. You bet your ass there's slapstick.

This Movie Gave to Me: Sore butt muscles.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Joan Severance in a frilly white bra. No, wait, that was *No Holds Barred*. Damn!

SILENT NIGHT, BLOODY NIGHT (1973)

'Tis the Season: To be bloody. Predating *Black Christmas* by at least a year, a maniac terrorizes townspeople with threatening telephone calls on Christmas Eve.

This Movie Gave to Me: Strained eyes – it's one of the darkest films ever made.

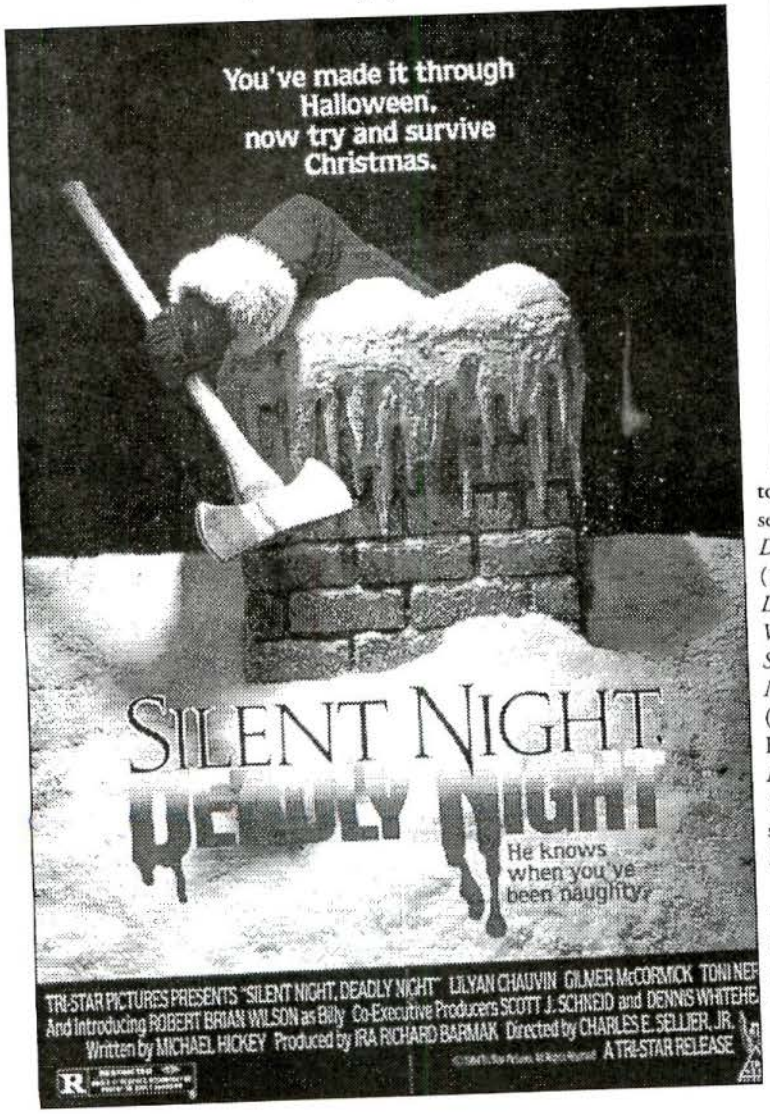
And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Andy Warhol posse members Candy Darling and Ondine make cameos.

SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT (1984)

'Tis the Season: To be sacrilegious. When a young boy sees his parents brutally murdered and raped by a criminal dressed as Santa Claus, he grows up to don the jolly costume himself and make similar yuletide mischief. Notorious and controversial upon its theatrical release, this truly is sick, unpleasant stuff.

This Movie Gave to Me: Four lame-ass sequels: *Silent Night, Deadly Night Part II* (1987); *Silent Night, Deadly Night 3: Better Watch Out!* (1989); *Silent Night, Deadly Night 4: Initiation* (1990), directed by Brian Yuzna; and *Silent Night, Deadly Night 5: The Toy Maker* (1992), starring, of all people, Mickey Rooney!

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Talk about *coitus interruptus*: Santa impales a topless woman on the antlers of a stuffed dead-animal head on the wall. Ho-ho-ho, ho!


You've made it through Halloween, now try and survive Christmas.
SILENT NIGHT
He knows when you've been naughty?
TRI-STAR PICTURES PRESENTS "SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT" LILYAN CHAUVIN GILMER McCORMICK TONI NEF
And Introducing ROBERT BRIAN WILSON as Billy Co-Executive Producers SCOTT J. SCHNEID and DENNIS WHITEHE
Written by MICHAEL HICKEY Produced by IRA RICHARD BARMAK Directed by CHARLES E. SELLIER, JR.
A TRI-STAR RELEASE
R

TALES FROM THE CRYPT (1972)

'Tis the Season: To be scary. Perhaps the most effective of the five stories in this anthology film is "All Through the House," in which *Dynasty*'s Joan Collins is chased through her abode by a maniac in a Santa suit, but only after brutally killing her paramour for his money. One of the earliest Kringle-as-killer portraits, it was effectively remade years later by Robert Zemeckis, as one of the first episodes of HBO's *Tales from the Crypt* series (and is also available on video).

This Movie Gave to Me: Nightmares.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Holy crap, it's Benny! (remake only)

YOU BETTER WATCH OUT (1980)

'Tis the Season: To be freaky. Also known as *Christmas Evil* and (better yet) *Terror in Toyland*, this horror film concerns a boy who freaks out when he learns Santa is a work of fiction when he sees his dad dressed as Santa about to have sex with his mom, and becomes obsessed with making Santa a reality. Working as a toymaker, he goes over the proverbial edge and on the now-familiar sleigh ride – er, that's *slay* ride.

This Movie Gave to Me: No desire to ever combine foreplay and a Santa suit.

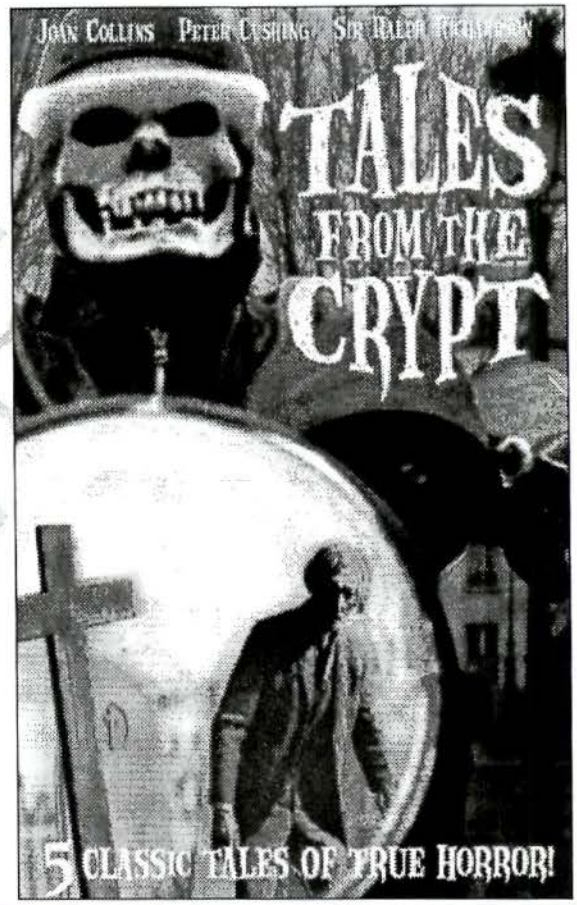
And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Our anti-hero uses a toy soldier to stab some poor schlub in the eye.

WILL & ED'S EXCELLENT BONER CHRISTMAS (1991)

'Tis the Season: To get busy. Starring Victoria Paris, it's the inevitable porno version of *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*, but with a holiday theme. Oh, and penetration. Somewhere, Jesus weeps.

This Movie Gave to Me: A milky discharge.

And What to My Wondering Eyes Should Appear: Actually, I haven't seen it, but I'm sure I'd say, "I haven't seen *that* before."

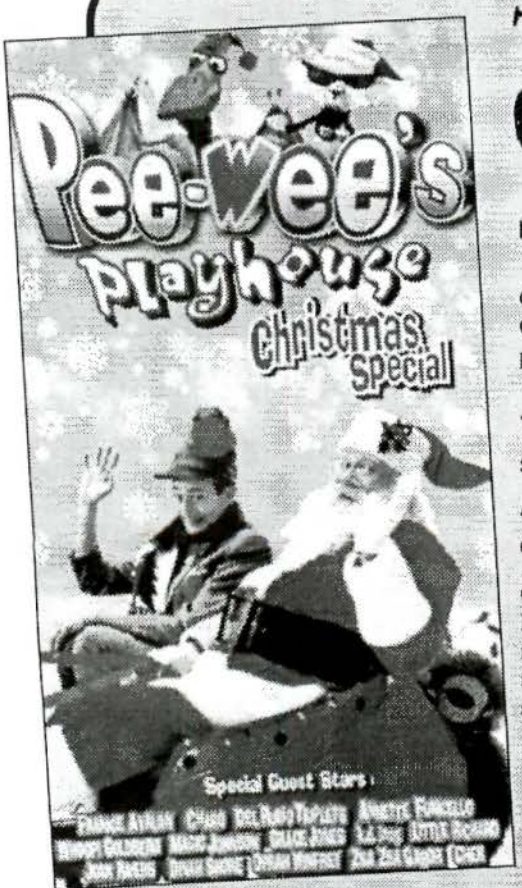


THEY CALL ME MISTER KRINGLE

Tim Allen
Ed Asner
Lewis Arquette
Fred Astaire
Jim Belushi
Robby Benson
Lloyd Bridges
Sebastian Cabot
John Call
Dean Cameron
Hamilton Camp
Ken Hudson Campbell
Art Carney
James Coburn
James Coco
Jim Cummings
Larry Drake

Christopher Durang
Jimmy Durante
◂ *Charles Durning*
Chris Elliott
Paul Frees
John Goodman
Edmund Gwenn
Nigel Hawthorne
David Huddleston

◂ *John Malkovich*
Chuck McCann
Ron Moody
Mickey Rooney



THREE TRULY TWISTED CHRISTMAS SPECIALS

PEE-WEE'S PLAYHOUSE CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

Check out this guest list: Frankie Avalon, Annette Funicello, The Del Rubio Triplets, Grace Jones, k.d. lang, Cher, Little Richard, Joan Rivers, Magic Johnson, Oprah Winfrey *and* Charo – a unique holiday experience from 1988 one could only expect from our nation's most public pud-puller.

THE REN & STIMPY SHOW: HAVE YOURSELF A STINKY LITTLE CHRISTMAS

Stimpy's got the holiday blues on Christmas Eve, but not for the usual reasons. Nope, Stimpy's sad because he's lost his first fart. Poignant *and* flatulent, but also not as funny as it sounds. Big points in the subversion department, however – especially for 1993.

HE-MAN AND SHE-RA: A CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

Excuse me, but weren't these guys Satan-worshippers?

Back from the Shadows
FOR GOOD
A Visit with THE FIRESIGN THEATRE
By Chris Henry

Once deified as the underground comedic champions of the late-'60s and early-'70s counterculture movement, the subversive and often surreal humor of the Firesign Theatre has always been savored, dissected and memorized by a small, yet very intelligent and loyal sector of the general population. For those with the cerebral fortitude necessary to keep pace with their trademark rapid-fire and reference-laden delivery, becoming attuned to the peculiar, but inescapable internal logic of the Firesign Theatre can be as challenging (and potentially rewarding) an experience as is to be found in the area of comedy performance.

Those suspicious of mixing such high-minded aspirations with humor will invariably ask, "Okay, but is it *funny?*" And it is – wildly, hysterically, and absurdly so. But more than providing cheap laughter, to listen to Firesign has always been to participate, to become involved with them in constructing the meaning of the work.

And the number of those who participate may be about to increase dramatically. With the release of the anticipated *The Bride of Firesign* album, a PBS special and a new radio series on deck, the four or five guys of Firesign find themselves in the unusual position of being poised for mass overnight discovery after a mere 35 years of prolific creative activity.

In recent interviews, members David Ossman, Phil Austin and Peter Bergman spoke with **HITCH** on a number of topics, from the dizzying array of new projects to Duchamp, dick jokes and disembodied entities named Greg.

In stark contrast to *Boom Dot Bust*, which had little in the way of self-reference, *The Bride of Firesign* embraces past material to a degree perhaps unmatched by any other work in its oeuvre. Nick Danger, Rocky and Bradshaw (from 1969's *How Can You Be in Two Places at Once When You're Not Anywhere at All?*), Porgie and Mudhead (from 1970's *Don't Crush That Dwarf, Hand Me the Pliers*) and the Radio Now crew (from *Immortality*) are all on hand for *Bride*. This return to the larger body of Firesign work was conscious and intentional.

In addition to providing a structure to celebrate the return of classic Firesign characters, inspiration for *Bride* appears to have been derived from two very divergent cultural sources.

"I specifically went out and rented *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, because I was looking for a plot, kind of a dumb plot," explained. Ossman. "At the beginning of that movie, Abbott and Costello are moving men, and they move Dracula and the monster in big boxes. And I thought, 'Oh, great! Here are these two kind of funny guys, these comics, as truck drivers.' And that's where we started with Porgie and Mudhead. But 'the bride' really comes from a much more arcane source, from the very famous work by Marcel Duchamp called *The Large Glass*, which to me is the central work of modern art. Duchamp has always been a real mentor of mine, intellectual mentor, and so this concept of the bride that he has – and I know this is rarefied air in comedy – is as untouchable, that the bachelors are always trying to reach her. And they're struggling against each other to do so. And in that sense, the way it evolved in the album, the album really turns out to be about guys, about growing up to be a man."

Ossman also shed additional light on the return of Porgie and Mudhead.

"I wrote a draft to do with Peter once on the radio that updated the existing driving scene from *Dwarf*, that put it all into contemporary cyber-language," he said. "We love doing that piece, so we started there with these guys as cyber-drivers. Growing them up and having them discover their adulthood, or their manhood, seemed to me to be really a good thing to do.

Cheese!

"With *Immortality*, we were thinking of our audience, who had grown up and got jobs and had families, responsibilities, and what would happen to them if they had to stay at work on an occasion of celebration that they couldn't share with their families. But the more I think about that album, the more I think it's about love, in that love is a giver of immortality. And *Boom Dot Bust*, we were really talking about economics, about the hard facts of life. It was much harder-edged. And so when we looked at *Bride*, dealing with people of our age, and the baby boomer age group, we wanted to once again talk about people who were working, whose identity to a great extent comes from work, from their jobs."

So how does the world look when your job is being a member of the Firesign Theatre?

"We're like a small African country," quipped Austin. "We're horrifyingly democratic. We each have a veto and any one of us can stop anything, even if the other three think it's just the most brilliant thing in the world. So what you hear in the end is something that none of the four of us controls. I think that's one of the main reasons why the writing is so different and so odd."

If none of the group members are in charge, then who is? The mysterious "fifth guy" alluded to by the oft-used phrase "the four or five guys of the Firesign Theatre?"

"That's exactly what the fifth guy is," Austin responded. "The fifth guy is the guy that we don't have any control over at all. It's the short way of saying we're not in control. We don't even know how many of us there are. It's a scary thought. 'Collective' is the wrong word, 'communal' is the wrong word. I often think of it as being closer to like in the '20s, when they would sit around with Ouija boards and you would have things called 'spirit writings,' where mysterious forces were pushing your pen around. That's what we're doing, in a weird way."

Bergman added, "Well, the fifth guy hovers over us whenever we come into contact and really mesh with one another. The Firesign Theatre – the four as one – is the fifth guy. There's a spiritual term 'egregor,' which is kind of the collective aura around an object. So you can call our fifth guy Egregor or Gregory or Greg."

The experience of listening to Firesign can be like taking the audio equivalent of a Rorschach test. Their recordings present the listener with a stimulus often so non-linear and ambiguous, one wonders if it isn't the listener's response that is more important than attempting to discover any inherent meanings of the piece. At

any rate, the normal mechanisms of sense-making rarely apply to their work.

"In that regard, I think that the thing we're most similar to is painters," said Austin, "because a lot of the reasons of why it's written the way it is, why it's so thick, why there's all these kind of odd references, why it's hard to figure out what it is we want you to figure out, is because we're not interested in you figuring out what we're figuring out. We're interested in really kind of hearing what *you* think of this stuff."

George Carlin has referred to the Firesign humor as "sweet" and "friendly." And despite a reputation for incisive and subversive commentary, there is at the core of their humor, a perennial warmth that is usually lacking in comedy recordings and performance.

"We don't attack the helpless," Bergman said. "When you think about the people that we beat on, it's the powerful. But there are a lot of people I can think of, and I won't name them, who have made a career out of beating on people who can't fight back, whether it's making fun of Iranian 7-Eleven workers or women or the handicapped or racial jokes or about the weak or the lame. But the best comedians always make fun of themselves."

Perpetually vocal critics of cultural hypocrisy, the Firesign Theatre have always managed to dispense their social commentary without becoming overly cynical.

"We don't make people feel cynical, but sometimes we frighten people," asserted Bergman. "The nature of our comedy is an incessant questioning of the system. And that makes certain people real nervous when they hear it. Some people shut off and say 'I don't get it, I don't get what's funny,' because they sense that there is an attack underway. Not a personal attack, but a social attack."

This iconoclastic, but ultimately humanitarian approach makes it easy to understand why Firesign were so highly revered among conscientious members of the counterculture and why their early works are rightly considered as classics of that time and place. Yet to localize their relevance to then is to ignore the scope and subject matter of their recent works, which reveal the Firesign with fingers firmly on the pulse of the new millennium. "Cyber" "digital" and "virtual" references abound, which, rather than being used as fast and easy buzzwords to prop up some tenuous claim to continued relevance in the age of the Internet, are utilized in such a way as to make clear the Theatre's rich understanding of the vicissitudes of modern life.

"That's what we'd hoped to do," said Ossman, "to be as relevant to now as we were relevant then to what was going on and to what our core audience was experiencing. It gave us hope that there's an audience growing up without *Seinfeld*, without that kind of humor, which I don't think any of us have a deep respect for. It's shallow; it's not concerned with the world. It's as unfunny in its own way as the stand-up comedians that we didn't want to be anything like when we started. We've tried to be as in tune with this younger audience and to say, look at the world you're growing up in. We've also tried to carry our adult audience through experiences which we think we all share, as we shared growing up, looking at the future, and the cyberworld."

In addition to being among the most pertinent to contemporary cultural conditions, the group also sees its new works as among its best.

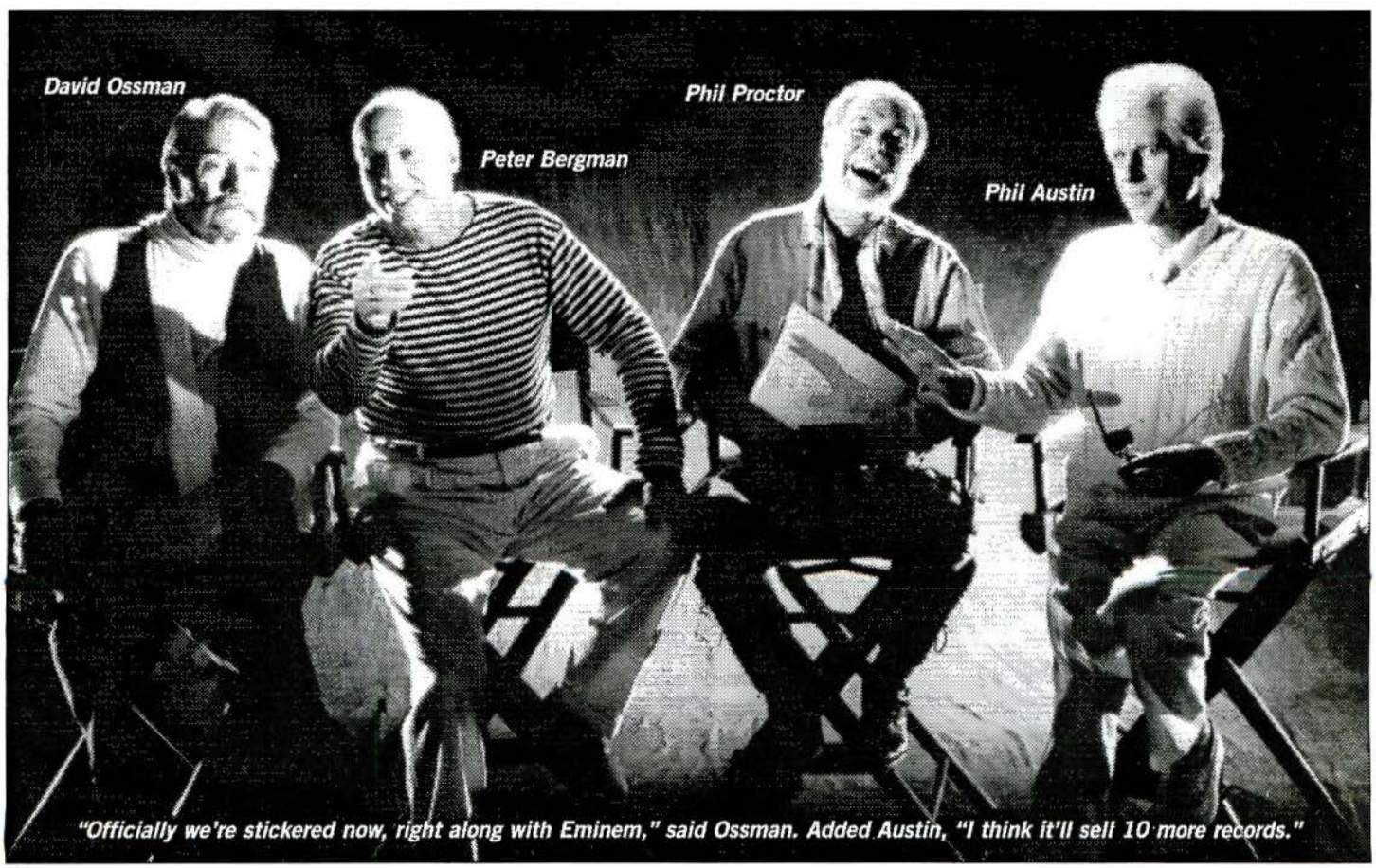
"To my thinking, *Bride of Firesign* is probably the most mature work we have ever turned out" said Bergman. "And one of the reasons is, it's got the most laughs. The Firesign Theatre is always thick and smart, but the challenge always is to be thick, smart *and funny*."

And while Firesign remains the indisputably finest practitioners of their specialized craft, it is equally indisputable that the craft itself is disappearing.

"Let's face it man," Bergman continued, "there's nobody else doing audio comedy. It's like we're practicing the art of rug making that's disappeared except in this small pueblo in Los Angeles."

When reminded that many people continue to look forward to the production of those rugs, Bergman replied, "That's true. And rugs always do well among the cognoscenti."

But with the completion of *Weirdly Cool*, a performance film of the Firesign Theatre's "greatest



"Officially we're stickered now, right along with Eminem," said Ossman. Added Austin, "I think it'll sell 10 more records."

hits," produced by Philadelphia's WHHY and currently airing nationwide on PBS, general cultural awareness of Firesign has the potential to soon reach an all-time high which is not too shabby for an ensemble that has already been legendary for more than three decades.

"I think thousands of more people will see us on this television show than have ever seen us on stage," said Ossman, "so we're very interested in what kind of impact it has."

Austin added, "It's our natural audience, and weíve never really had access to them."

"We're gonna be seen by millions of people over the next 12 months, and that's gonna change the whole awareness of the Firesign Theatre," mused Bergman, with obvious excitement. "I mean, here we are, 61 years old, and suddenly being discovered. Now the good news about that is that we can't really commit a lot of youthful blunders now."

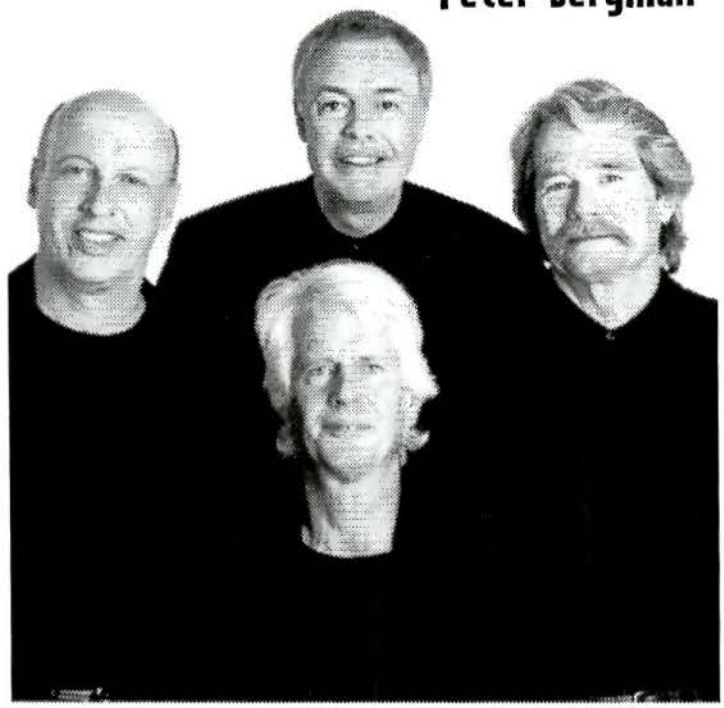
The sense of maturity Bergman referred to is readily apparent in their recent recorded works, along with an obviously renewed vigor for writing and performing, making them feel even more enthusiastic than their classic early works.

"And they are," he replied. "They are more enthusiastic. I would say one of the things that might have dampened our enthusiasm in the past was the fact that they were much more difficult times. They were times of much deeper pessimism, and the albums are darker for perfectly good reasons. But somebody recently mentioned to me, 'You're gonna get the Millies, the millennium generation, because they want authentic voice, they want real authenticity.' And the Firesign Theatre has never abandoned its authenticity."

Bergman made it clear that, with this renewed vitality and passion, Firesign is in it for the long haul, saying it's "entirely possible" they could be performing for at least another decade or two.

"All the stuff that I really value about the Firesign Theatre still seems to be a big part of the records we're putting out," Austin said, "in spite of the constant use of the word 'dick.'"

"The nature of our comedy is an incessant questioning of the system."
—Peter Bergman



The use of that particular term, which occurs numerous times throughout the opening cut of *The Bride of Firesign*, may well go down as one of the most controversial and, according to group members, misunderstood moments in all of Firesign history.

"That's all these men think about, for good or for ill, or stupid or for good medical reasons, whatever it may be," said Ossman. "We decided to put that piece up front, at the top, rather than burying it somewhere in the album as a commercial or a spot. We decided to put it up front because we really felt that it stated what the album was about on one level, which is about being a man"

Added Bergman, "It's not really even dick jokes; it's all about dicks, but it's not about how long they are, none of that. It's all about, hey, you've got a dick and you're gonna have to live with it."

As a result of the "dick" controversy, *Bride* is the first-ever Firesign Theatre recording to carry a parental advisory sticker.

"We worked for years to get that," Austin joked. "It was big fun when Proctor and I able to hand George Carlin the album and say, 'Hey, look, we've finally come up to your level.' In fact, I think it'll probably sell 10 more records than otherwise."

Ossman laughed, "Officially we're stickered now, right along with Eminem and everything else."

He related a friend playing cuts from *Bride* on the air and, due to FCC regulations, having to open the mike and cough over the word "tits."

"So that's a dangerous word too," he noted. "But on the other hand, who could resist 'truth and beauty' and 'tits and booty?'"

Along with *Bride* and *Weirdly Cool*, the third prong of the current Firesign onslaught will be a new XM Radio7 show, which will consist of a monthly Saturday night, two-hour live broadcast. Ossman said the show, *Fools in Space*, will be a combo of brand-new, in-studio improv and previously recorded works.

Ddespite their enthusiasm for upcoming projects, the members are feeling acutely the impact of current events, with the terrorist activity in New York and Washington, DC occurring a scant nine days prior to this interview. They clearly realize that, having the podium of a national radio program, they will have to address recent events in one fashion or another.

"We have a weird responsibility all of a sudden, having a big national outlet like this," said Austin. "It's really gonna put us up against that."

Added Bergman, "You can do humor when you're at war. But you can't do humor in the midst of a huge bloody tragedy. Humorists never stopped when we went to war; they just made fun of the enemy. But there's no enemy to make fun of. We don't know who it is. You gonna make fun of 19 hijackers who are dead amongst the rest of the bodies?"

Austin agreed. "All the easy things are cut off for us. So it's really gonna be interesting to see what the hell we think about this."

Kevin Murphy of *Mystery Science Theater 3000* lists Firesign in his bio as a major influence, right between Frank Zappa and James Joyce – putting them into a unique cultural perspective. It's obvious that their impact on popular culture is far greater than record sales or other conventional measures of success would indicate. But how do the members themselves go about assessing that impact?

"I think the people who know us, memorize us, and the rest of the people don't know who we are," said Bergman.

Austin added, "The guys are very fun to work with right now, because everybody seems very intent on taking care of the Firesign Theatre. And I swear to God, I feel from the public the same feeling."

So celebrate them, study them, memorize them, canonize them – just don't call them a "cult" group.

"Anytime anybody talks about us being a cult group, it always gets me pissed," Bergman said. "We're not a cult. Yeah, we'd like you to collect them all, but that's not cultish."

Offered Austin, "It's a little like we're the hosts at a party. The audience is not just sitting there, it's as if they're writing it. I think that's one reason that our stuff is memorized perhaps more than almost any other comedians."

The Firesign Theatre cordially invites you to join them in that ongoing party, post-millennium style. So load up the Elmers, put on your eyeball hats, and don't forget to pump your shoes.

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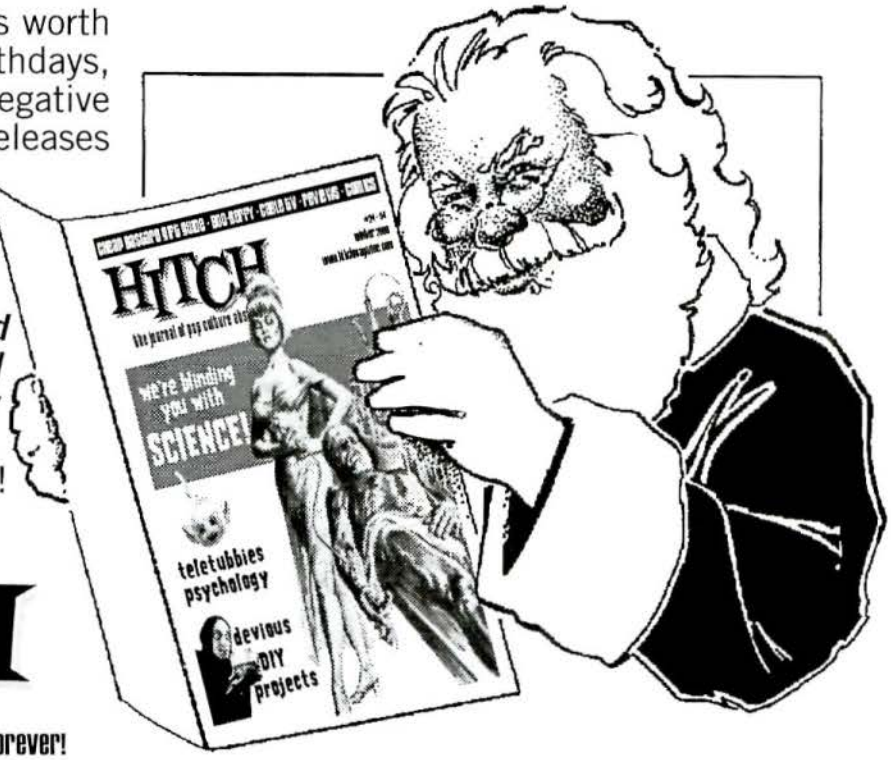


HITCH

the journal of pop culture absurdity ... now & forever!

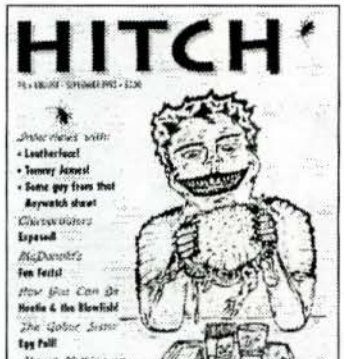
GET HITCHED WITH THESE BACK ISSUES!

#8 / AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 1995 – You'll never eat out again after reading our report on fast food horror stories. Stand in awe of our three celebrity interviews: Leatherface from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, Tommy James from The Shondells and some buff guy from *Baywatch*. Plus, a he-man adventure to a quack chiropractor, the McDonald's FAQ, the Hootie-O-Matic and how to get tons o' chicks. 44 pages (four of them in bright, headache-inducing orange!) in all. For an issue this old, I'm surprised we have any left, but we do.

#9 / OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 1995 – Who cares if the cover story is on summer movies of '95? It's still funny. As are Rod's attempts at becoming an underwear model, our first-person tale of being a habitual blood donor, a look at country music cuties, drugstore horror stories, federally funded fun facts and we get blown off by one-half of The Monkees (and exact our revenge in print). 44 pages in all, and still one of our all-time best. Maybe that's why we only have a few left.

#10 / DECEMBER 1995 / JANUARY 1996 – Our much-beloved Travel Issue! Take a trip with us to Dallas' JFK conspiracy convention, Oregon's scariest family fun park and various roadside freak shows! Plus, an interview with a chick from *Road Rules*, dirty Disney, some Batchat with Adam West, the Tweed-O-Matic and something we'll just call "your rectum, your friend." 44 pages in all. This is the issue that very nearly cost Rod his day job, so shouldn't you have it for that reason alone? Maybe a lucky few of you will, as that's all that's left in the ol' closet.

#15 / SPRING 1997 – Take a he-man adventure to Hawaii, dig in to the joys of Lamaze class and get a job with our exclusive **HITCH** Guide to Gainful Employment. Plus, there's a not-at-all-complete episode guide to that Saturday-morning '70s favorite *Shazam!*, confessions of a nose spray addict, a look back at *Twin Peaks* and how to be a stand-up comedian. 64 fat pages in all. We accidentally ordered an extra box of these, but please do not take that as an indicator of poor quality, as you'd be wrong. *Wrong,* we tell you!



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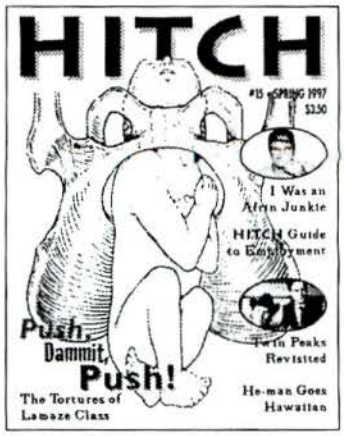

Issue #15

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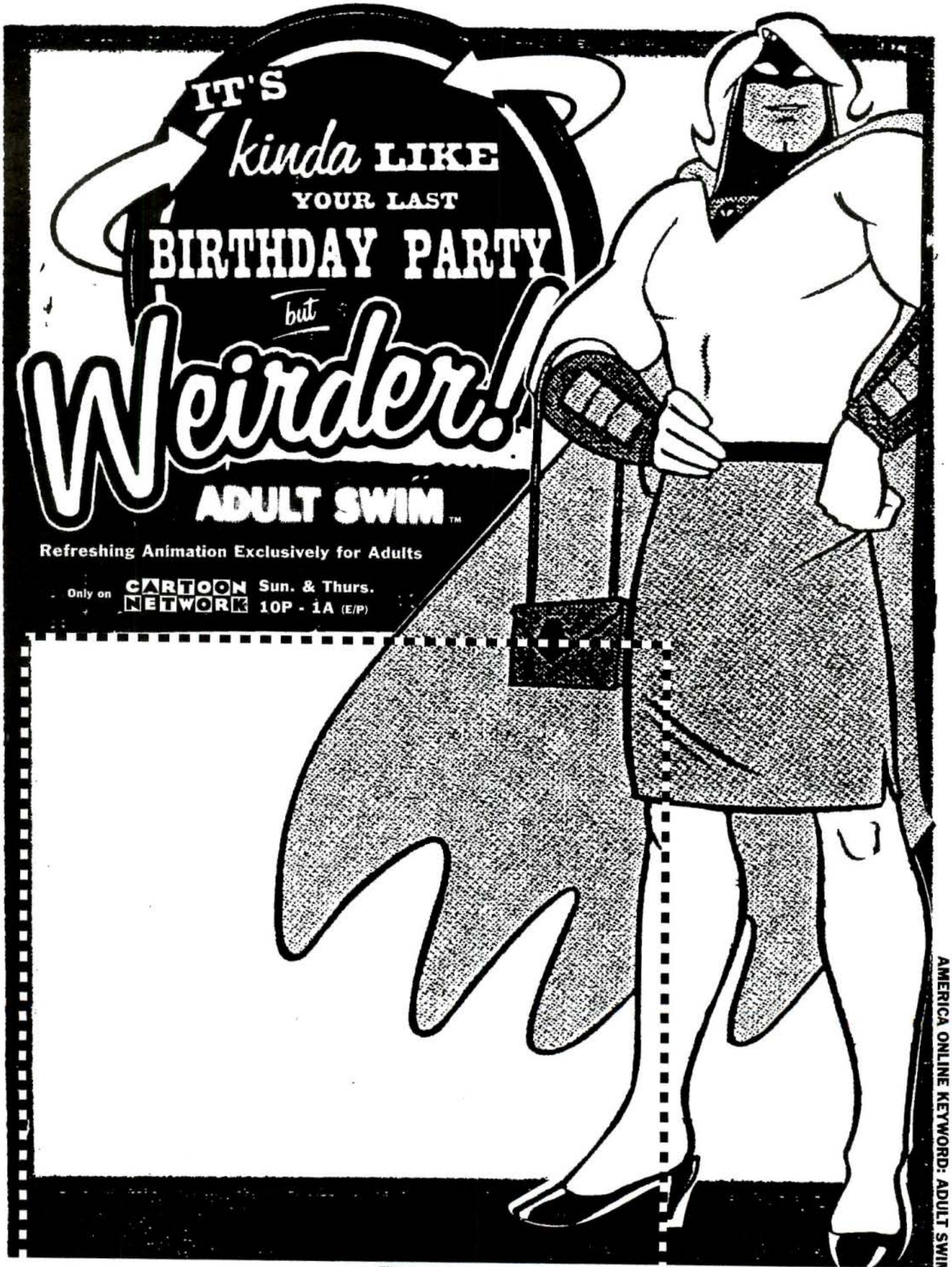

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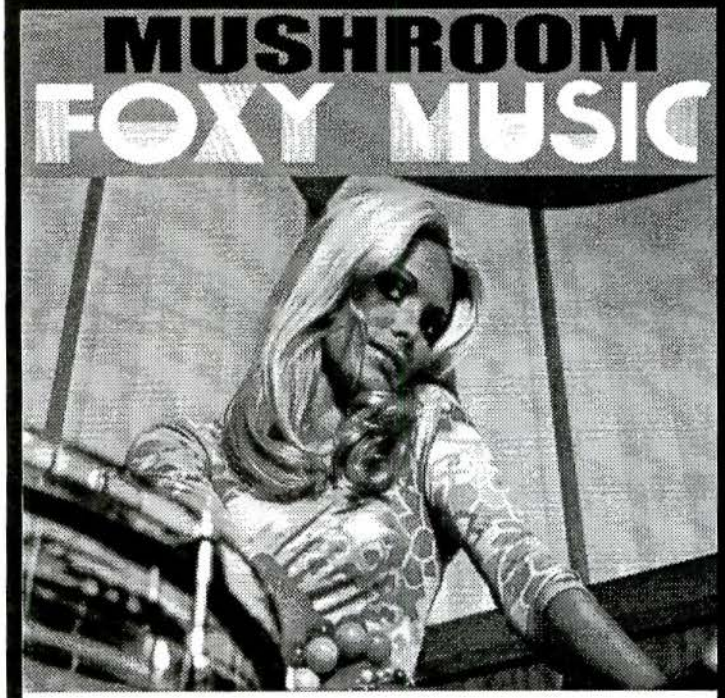


cd of the moment

Mushroom
Foxy Music
(innerSPACE)

Which came first, the album or the remix album? In Mushroom's case, it was the latter, *Compared to What?*, favorably reviewed two issues ago. Good as it was, it only hinted at the greatness of its source material, the just-released (and aptly titled) *Foxy Music*. One can compare the record to a party – it certainly begins like one, with the funk-jazz romp of "Grooving with Herbie," a vibe continued until about midway. At that point – "I Had Some Dreams, They Were Clouds in My Coffee" – the intoxication kicks in and the tempo slows as the mind swirls into spacier territories. Your second wind kicks in a bit – albeit woozily – with the slightly surreal and sound-effect-laden "Super Goody Bags." By the time it's last call, you're all geared up for another go-round. I like Mushroom's knack for a good song title (from the aforementioned Carly Simon reference to "Joe Namath" and "Don't Blame Me, I Voted for McGovern"), but most of all, I like their knack to spin gold with each and every jam. You gotta love those funkin' flutes and trampish trumpets – hell, you'll love it all. This one I plan to spin all winter long.

LIKE IT? TRY...

- Mushroom: *Compared to What* (innerSPACE)
- Tortoise: *Standards* (Thrill Jockey)
- National Health: *Missing Pieces* (East Side Digital)
- Oranj Symphonette: *The Oranj Album* (Rykodisc)

STILL SPINNING

- I Am the World Trade Center: *Out of the Loop* (Kindercore)
- *Tomb Raider* (Elektra)
- *Kaleidoscopic Beats: Groove Anthology* (Indigo)
- Air: *10,000Hz Legend* (Astralwerks)
- Gorillaz: *Gorillaz* (Virgin)

rock

Mercury Rev
All Is Dream
(V2)

Deserter's Songs marked not only a radical departure for this once-all-but-unlistenable band, but one of *the* very best albums of its decade. Heck, it's still probably better than anything the '00s have brought us. Thus, I'm mighty pleased that the aptly titled follow-up, *All Is Dream*, shares *Deserter's* ethereal, storybook-opera quality. It announces itself with a crash of cymbals, giving way to remarkable swells of music. The mellotrons, bowed saws and strings that made *Deserter's Songs* so wonderous return, and used to dazzle and depress once more. If nothing else, the record proves having a "produced by Dave Fridmann" credit is currently the industry's true mark of excellence.

The Starting Line
With Hopes of Starting Over...
(Drive-Thru)

These five tracks of passable punk-ska-pop likely would have flourished back in the days of Goldfinger and Reel Big Fish. The youngsters of the band tackle the material with a style beyond what their age might suggest, even if their sense of irony (covering Starship's "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now") needs a fine polish.

Daniel Johnston
Rejected Unknown
(Gammon)

Daniel Johnston writes damn fine songs, some of which are undeniable masterpieces. I just think someone else should sing them. Johnston, whose mental history is well documented, sounds unconfident, like someone whose mental history is well documented. But entrust his tunes to an able throat – such as Glass Eye's K. McCarty, who recorded a whole record's worth – and unpolished gold glistens. Here, Johnston gives voice to his own words, and the delivery is disconcerting, likely because they're so personal. (This is *not* a case of laugh-at-the-retard novelty, *a la* Wesley Willis.) The poppier numbers are better, like "Love Forever" and "Impossible Love," but the others are hard to shake, too, like the haunting "Dream Scream" or "Devinar," which briefly lapses into the Police's "Every Breath You Take," easily usurping Puff Daddy.

A Girl Called Eddy
Tears All Over Town
(Le Grand Magistery)

Eddy's five-track debut makes for pleasant but unremarkable listening, a fine, fine voice ill supported by sparse music that fails to accompany her properly, lifting this to the heights it knows it can reach. She's a good writer, but oddly chooses to cover Stephen Bishop anyway. File under not quite.

My Favorite
A Cult of One
(Double Agent)

This struck me like a dark '80s band fronted by Meadow Soprano. On a mere four tracks, the EP gives off a good 'n' spooky quasi-goth vibe with ace musicianship and lyrics that read like startlingly great fiction. I think I played it three times in a row, and each time enveloped me more. Speaking of "more," yes, please.

The Blood Group
Everything Forgotten Gathers at the Ceiling
(Le Grand Magistery)

At turns joyous and unsettling, the Group's debut EP is a mopey affair brought to addictive fruition by touches of baroque, the programming of NASA and, most of all, the slowly seductive vocals of Jessica B. Alternately recalling the sweet syrup of Hooverphonic and Stereolab, she steals the show.

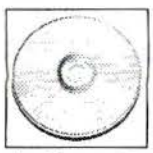
Thalia Zedek
Been Here and Gone
(Matador)

Former Come vocalist Zedek delivers a fairly quiet and slow (but methodically melodic) solo album that's easy on the instrumentation

but heavy on the introspection. (The Leonard Cohen cover is a red flag for that sort of thing.) Zedek's voice is unusual to say the least – deep and knowing, and more than a little like Courtney Love on anesthesia, just before the point of unconsciousness – but it works to her advantage on each precious and personal song.

Chocolate Genius
Godmusic
(V2)
"Genius" is pushing it too far, but this is the smartest blend of soul and hip-hop you'll hear all year. Devoid of the tired gangsta posturing, Marc Anthony Thompson delivers a much-needed dose of laid-back, intelligent, fully aware music that would make Marvin Gaye proud as punch. The simple "Love" is a bright spot, as is the instrumental "Birth Control." It's the smooth second record in a promised "four-part trilogy."

Three 4 Tens
Change Is on Its Way
(File 13)
Foot-tapping indie-rock with a definite '60s garage-rock sound that I am *soooo* glad to hear. Every song is atmospheric, melodious and wouldn't be out of place on something like the *High Fidelity* soundtrack. "Mary's Poppin'" is a Jefferson Airplane-esque rocker that never wears out its welcome, while "Right on Time" and "j.b.n." are every bit as good as the latter-day Byrds albums were. "Happy New Year" is wonderfully slow and I dare you not to bob your head to "Sugar Creek Road." I wish more bands would go for this sound, but until then, check these guys out. *–LF*



Friendly Rich
Brampton
(The Pumpkin Pie Corporation)
For those who don't know, Friendly Rich is some guy who used to do the music for *The Tom Green Show* back when he was on Canadian Public Access. *Brampton* is a bizarre collage of noises and sounds that is hit-or-miss, with cuts that range from scary to unlistenable. The opener is a phone prank called "Between Your Tits and Ass" that is pretty funny, but it moves in to the screaming freak-out, masterfully called "I'd Dine With a Pack of Militant Vegan Dykes Just to Eat the Corn From Your Shit." Yoko Ono would be proud. Actually most of the songs are like this – nonsensical odes to scatology. It does get grating after a while, but it's worth it to hear the hilarious "Ballad of Ken Carter," a folky, acoustic ode to a low-rent Canadian Evel Knievel-wannabe. *–LF*

Mr. Wright
Hello Is Anyone Out There
(Le Grand Magistery)
Every now and then, you run across a disc so good that you put off reviewing it for months, because you just can't come across words proper enough to do it justice. So here I am, having digested Mr. Wright's thoroughly winning album for the better part of 12 weeks now, and I'm still shooting blanks. But like the ocean its cover depicts, its heavenly pop flows like the tide, building and building to purely majestic peaks. That Mr. Wright doesn't seem to know his greatness keeps this from falling into the "damn, aren't I clever and cute?" category. Lush, royal and a must-have for those addicted to watery, shimmering melodies.

The Atlantic Manor
The Desperate Vibe of Emotional Devestation
(Do Too)
It took a while for this to grow on me (mostly due to the vocals), but after repeated listens, I realized here lies a musically terrific album. The opener "Moonlight Drive" is a straight-ahead alterna-rocker while "Deathwish Safety Check" comes off like out-of-tune Ween, which I think is a good thing. As a matter of fact, the album has a very Ween-ish tone and I would include this as one of my top albums of the year if not for the damned annoying vocals. My advice to The Atlantic Manor: Guys, you've got something good here, just hire yourselves a capable singer. "For What It's Worth" could have been a great song. *–LF*

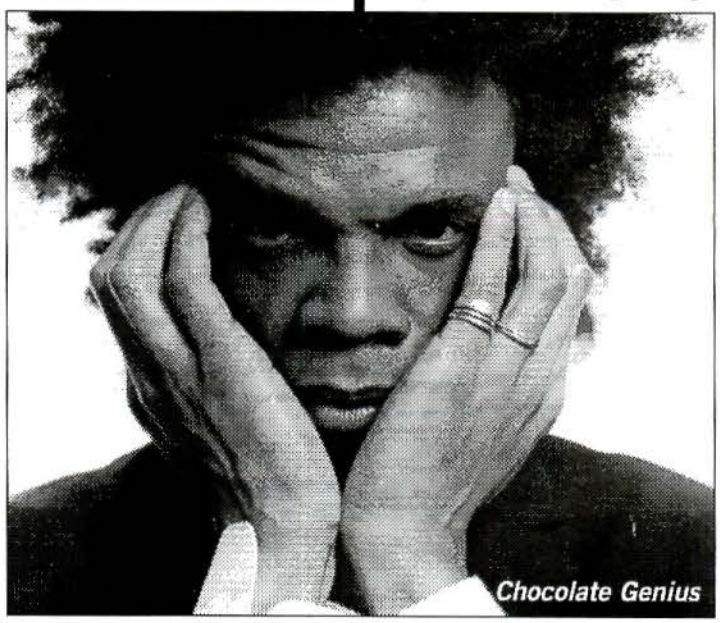
IAMAPHOTOGRAPHER.
(Plain)
A tribute to the Antonioni film *Blow-Up* (but *not* covering its Herbie Hancock soundtrack), *IAMAPHOTOGRAPHER.* lets its 13 contributors run wild with "inspired by" creations. While only two-thirds successful, those two-thirds are great enough to warrant a search. Clocking in with the longest song title (19 words!), Matmos' clinical, cut-'n-paste approach sets an innovative, off-the-beaten path mood, one paid off in spades by space-jazzers Mushroom and Birdsong's Air Force, whose "Full Frontal Nudity" instrumental is far too brief. I don't know why 10 minutes of old-man mumbling made the cut, but Richard Youngs' "1966" is a dream track – proving that sometimes, the best melodies are the simplest ones.

Paul Reddick + The Sidemen
Rattlebag
(Kingnote)

Harry Manx
Dog My Cat
(Northern Blues)
I'm sorry, but I just can't listen to middle-aged white people play the blues – it's downright sad and embarrassing. I just don't see what they have to be blue about. Can they not pay for their son's braces? When are they gonna play the "I Gotta Take a Second Mortgage Out Rag"? Like I've said in the past, leave to the blues to the black man. Paul Reddick is electric, Stevie Ray-style blues that you'd hear at the 3:45 p.m. slot at the State Fair talent show. But on the other hand, Harry Manx is a bit more listenable, because he has a Ry Cooder-ry guitar sound that I like, but then he has to open his mouth and ruin it all. On the bright side, I just bought the R.L. Burnside album, *An Ass Pocket of Whiskey*, and I have been listening to that for days. I suggest you do the same and let these white guys find a new way to pay for their daughter's private school tuition. *–LF*

The Four Corners
Say You're a Scream
(Kindercore)
While Kindercore co-founder Dan Geller goes electropop with I Am the World Trade Center, partner Ryan Lewis opts for a stripped-down guitar combo that plays like a '60s go-go party – tambourines, sitars and all. The music is simple yet tight, co-opting surf and spy styles when the occasion rightly calls for it. *Scream* kicks off with a killer pipeline of an instrumental, but the rest of the record is filled with vocals by girls who sound like they're singing on shots of Nyquil. With the exception of *Pet Sounds*, this is the only CD I own with the entire program included in mono and stereo mixes.

Take Everything Very Seriously
(Double Agent)
The under-the-radar but astonishingly awesome Massachusetts-based indie label Double Agent spotlights its current artist roster with this compilation of singles and remixes. It begins with a mix of my favorite Double Agent song


Chocolate Genius

so far, Unisex's spacey "The Full Force of the Sun," with its vocoder vocals manipulated to sound even more intergalactic. The long-dormant Telescopes return with the aptly titled "Tesla Death Ray" – their first song in almost a decade – so good I'm really looking forward to their upcoming LP. Also contributing are Solar Saturday, Kitch and Papas Fritas – and not a stinker in the whole bunch.

Hydroplane
The Sound of Changing Places
(Drive-In)

Here's some excellent mope-pop for your next rainy day. Combining an '80s alternative sound with '90s beats quietly shuffling in the background, Hydroplane's *Sound* simply captivates. Kerrie Bolton's vocals – delivered without a hint of irony – are dreamy, as is Andrew Withycombe's programming, like Ladytron on Tylenol Allergy-Sinus. Check out "Kangaroo and Map," but just be sure to check out the whole thing, too, okay?

Lifer
Lifer
(Republic/Universal)

You could play the opening seconds of each track here and, with the exception of maybe two, be unable to tell one from the other. All that follows doesn't get much more distinctive, either. It's a bunch of bombastic guitar chords, ska-screaming and just plain unappealing sounds all around. The name must come from what you'll feel like listening to it.

Better than The Beatles: A Tribute to The Shaggs
(Animal World)

In 1969, three teenage sisters who could barely play their instruments or write songs recorded an album called *Philosophy of the World*. Although the record only sold 100 copies, it became a favorite by artists such as Frank Zappa (who said they were "better than the Beatles") and NRBQ, who later reissued the album. Needless to say, The Shaggs have since become cult legends. This tribute features a wide range of indie rock artists from R. Stevie Moore and Double U to the Thinking Fellers Union Local 282 and Joost Visser from Holland. Not bad for a band that had no sense of beat, rhythm or melody. This tribute CD has made the songs a little more musical and that's probably a good thing. However, unless you're a fan of the one of the bands featured on this tribute, I suggest you track down a Shaggs album to see what made everyone scratch their hands and wonder, is this for real? –*PT*

Neu!
Neu!
(Astralwerks)
Neu!
Neu!2
(Astralwerks)
Neu!
Neu!'75
(Astralwerks)

Neu! has never received the acclaim it's due, primarily because its three landmark records have never seen a release outside Germany until now. A partnership between former Kraftwerk members Klaus Dinger and Michael Rather, Neu! wasn't exactly prolific, but what they did produce has influenced everyone from Stereolab to Radiohead. Now Astralwerks' issuing of three seminal Neu! LPs allow us to hear why. The first, *Neu!*, is the finest, and no less than a benchmark, really, as the guys create rich, sprawling jams that resonate and invigorate. Though good, *Neu!2* is a bit of a slump compared to its papa – imagine the first LP slowed down and cut up, and you'd be correct, because that's pretty much what they did. *Neu!'75* is a return to the original's form, and a just hair away from being its equal. However, it's the most contemporary of the bunch, and an excellent place into which to dip your big toe before diving in.

The Court & Spark
Bless You
(Absolutely Kosher)

If all of country music sounded like this, I'd be a cowboy, dammit. This mix of alt-country, folk and rock – frosted with a Flying Burrito icing – is wickedly good, opening slowly yet surely, pacing its wonderful moments for maximum pleasure. As great as "To See the Fires" is, "National Lights" is one for the time capsule, with terrific male-female vocal interplay. Gene Parsons and Marc Bolan are a couple of the hired hands for the band's phenomenal work.

The Satelliters
Sexplosive!
(Dionysus)

The Boss Martians
Move!
(Dionysus)

This *Sexplosive!* record is a strong dose of good-time, get-yer-hands-dirty garage punk from Germany. (Yep, Germany!) The fuzz-fueled proceedings feature organs that won't quit, blazing percussion and a

Q+A with Optiganally Yours

The inventive Optiganally Yours is one of the bands featured on Better than The Beatles: A Tribute to The Shaggs, *out now on Animal World. We spoke with OY's Pea Hicks about the project.*

What was it about The Shaggs that made you want to be a part of the album?

Hicks: We've been big Shaggs fans for years. It's about as simple as that. Rob always wanted to do a cover of "You're Something Special to Me" and this seemed like a good opportunity.

Do you have anything in common with an act like The Shaggs?

Hicks: I suppose so, though we can't claim the same level of "purity." Rob's vision is pretty pure; I keep desecrating it with my gimmickry!

You've been on The Powerpuff Girls *soundtrack and Human League tribute album. Do you view these projects as audience-wideners or evil marketing schemes?*

Hicks: We don't really think in those terms. We simply take projects that interest us, or at the very least, one of us. Take the Human League thing – I'm a big fan of early-'80s synthpop, but Rob hates most of that crap.

Who would you want to appear on your tribute album?

Hicks: My first instinct would be to name my musical heroes, but that would come down to people like Igor Stravinsky. I suppose I'd have to make a list of our songs and think of a band that might be able to do a cool version of each one. It's easier for me to pick people to do OY remixes, like our recent remix EP, *Optiganally Yours De-Composed.*

If you hadn't run across that Optigan, what the hell would you be doing?

Hicks: Probably all the other musical projects I've always done. The whole Optigan thing is just one my pet projects that happened to gain more attention than the other ones.

What's next for OY?

Hicks: We're working on our third album, *OY in Hi-Fi*. We're taking the next evolutionary step to avoid pigeonholing ourselves, using original studio master tapes of the Optigan sounds as our raw source material.

vocal delivery that more often than not recalls the Stones in their early heyday. There's an obscure Monkees cover thrown in, but blends in so well you may not even notice. Coasting along the same energetic plane is the even more swinging (and polished) surf-rock sound off Seattle's The Boss Martians. The sound is very West Coast drapstrip, but delves into a bit of disco with "Introducing the 1971 Dodge Charger Super Bee," a tinge of polka in the "Trouble on 2 Wheels" instrumental and south-of-the-border flavoring with "Chihuahua Del Diablo." The lounge-like "Intermission" is also a nice touch.

Brass Monkey
Brass Band
Live in Time and Space
(Weed)

The idea of an alternative brass band with a large lineup – Mushroom member Jon Birdsong among them – intrigued me, but I'm sorry to say it's all still a little New Orleans for me. It doesn't help that it opens with an extended take on "When the Saints Go Marching In." Things get funkier and pick up with "Voodoo Duty" and "Drugged and Beat Up," which come off like jams from band geeks who got a hold of a couple six-packs, but still reminiscent of crawfish and gumbo. I'm betting this would *kill* live, though.

The Penetrators
Locked & Loaded
(Double Crown)

The Apemen
7 Inches of Love
(Double Crown)

The Penetrators should score the next *Mission: Impossible* movie, because they'd give it a serious dose of cool as well as some much-needed levity. *Locked & Loaded* is a superb spy-saturated record of surf-rock, riding a vast wave of changing tempos and moods as a solid soundtrack should. The ace design work totally draws you in to the record's own little world, too. Meanwhile, The Apemen get down 'n' dirtier with *7 Inches of Love*, a collection of 16 hard-to-find singles, many of which make their CD debut here. They opt for a raw sound that exudes tons of energy

on tracks like "Percolator Stomp" or the downright exhausting live version of the seminal "Miserlou." My exposure to the Apemen has been limited, but this seems like a worthy starting point.

Simian
Chemistry Is What We Are
(Astralwerks)

This London-borne offering begins strangely, with a sparse accordion and twee voice prompting a "What the hell?" and a raised eyebrow. Then the drums kick in like flood waters and it all makes sense, yet still toes the line of the unusual. Simian's music is best summed up as acidic slo-rock from two or three centuries past, delivered by voices that sound suspiciously Bee Gees-ian. "The Wisp" would be my favorite cut – Supertramp by way of Stereolab – if not for the U.S.-only bonus track, "The Tale of Willow Hill," a sweeping little number of ambiguous harmony.

Call and Response
Call and Response
(Emperor Norton/Kindercore)

One of this year's very best albums is now even better, repackaged by Emperor Norton and boasting two new songs and four remixed tracks. Its ba-ba-bop choruses and beach-ball lullabies are utterly infectious – a candy-coated soft-pop confection recalling The Free Design, Stereolab and Air that sounds like the way you wish you could feel 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Of the new songs, "All Night Long" stands out as a loopy exercise in easy-listening disco. If you haven't bought this yet, there's really no excuse not to now.

Russ Tolman
New Quadraphonic Highway
(Weed)

This is trucker's music for the 21st – and perhaps even 22nd – century. Tolman and company strum quasi-country tunes at 65 mph, and juice it up with unusual bleeps and bloops, giving the impression that some strange signals from space are filtering in to the AM dial. And it's a fun, fast ride. One song was written by John Wesley Harding and another Tolman co-wrote with Steve Wynn, so he's in good company. He may not be in their league, but he's getting there.

Schatzi
Death of the Alphabet EP
(Mammoth)

The hard-pop quartet Schatzi have a secret weapon in its "Death of the Alphabet" single, a sour-sweet confection that's pretty engaging, and even improved upon by an outrageous remix which closes out this EP. The other tunes don't quite hit as high or hard, but aren't to be sneezed at, either.

Marvin Gaye
Let's Get It On: Deluxe Edition
(Motown)

Motown has started a series of deluxe editions of classic Gaye albums, in which the original LP is expanded to a 2-CD set with rough mixes, demos, live versions and works-in- progress, lending a "fly-on-the-wall" inside view during the recording of the album. The sexy rhythmic grind of *Let's Get It On* was first released in 1973 and anticipated disco (but don't hold that against it). This is a soulful masterwork with Gaye's voice projecting a tasty R&B sophistication that goes way past the dance floor. *–PT*

Bingo Trappers
Juanita Ave.
(Animal World)

This Amsterdam-based duo has garnered comparisons to Velvet Underground and The Kinks. But they're not nearly as innovative as the former, and not even close to the witty lyrics of the latter. Instead, they're more mournful dirge rock, and you can only take so much of that. With soft, lo-fi songs that range from the Dylan-influenced "God's Biographer" to the psychedelic-'60s style of "The Real Mr. Tambourine," this is the realm of restrained garage music that's pleasant enough, but a bit monotonous. The sometimes too-simple music is serviceable, with soft but purposeful drums and okay lyrics. But the adenoid-laden voice doesn't have the necessary quirky charm of a Wayne Hancock or Stanard Ridgway; it's just dull. Some tracks shine, especially "Behind the Scenes," the post-post-New Wave "The Last Resort/Seinpost 1976" and the top-level "Is That a Fact?" But overall, it's just decent soft nighttime music, with a glass of red wine watching a baseball game alone with the sound down as you drift off to sleep. *–MR*

Tramps, Traitors & Little Devils: A Drag City Supersession
(Drag City)

A comp album … er, I mean a "Supersession" album, featuring a number of Drag City recording artists. This project created by Neil Michael Hagerty (ex-Pussy Galore and Royal Trux) is 10 tracks of originals and covers performed by the likes of Hagerty, Bill Callahan (Smog) and Edith Frost, backed by the percussion of Rian and Brendan Murphy (Chestnut Station) and Jim O'Rourke, Tara Key, etc. But all that superhoocy aside, this is a great selection of songs. From the warm, jangly dissonance of Callahan's "Zero Degrees" through the trad beat of Hagerty's "Texas Dogleg" and into Edith Frost's rich, back-of-the-throat voice that somehow manages to fill your head from the inside out, stroking your ears, clos-

Q+A

with Arling & Cameron

Dutch duo Arling & Cameron now let AC3D – the robot versions of themselves – do most of their dirty work. We chatted with AC3D (and the human Cameron, too) about We Are A&C, *out now on Emperor Norton.*

Do robots like Burt Bacharach?
AC3D: We are not familiar with an instrument called Burt Bacharach. Could it be you are talking about a cocktail? We don't drink. Don't drink and drive.

How do you answer those who say you've sold out by licensing your music to TV commercials?
Cameron: The moment you decide to sell your music, you are accepting that is used commercially. "Selling out" implies compromising your music. We didn't have to change our music any way to fit into a commercial or film.

Forget the imaginary films – for which real-life films could this album serve as a soundtrack?
Cameron: We didn't intend this album to be a soundtrack. Funny enough, most of our songs used in films, commercials and TV came from *All-In*, which wasn't a soundtrack album, and not from our soundtrack album, *Music from Imaginary Films*. In that respect, that might be a good omen for this one.

Your albums seem different from one another, so how radical a departure will the next one be?
Cameron: All our albums represent musical freedom and an uncompromising joy in making music. We don't know what the next one will sound like, but we have few ideas for an album for AC3D. We are thinking of an unplugged album, very sweet and beautiful.

How about the boys?
Cameron: The meaning of that song changes each time we think of it. You can read so many things into it. Originally it had a very homoerotic feel, but in our new live show, we play it to a video of images of world leaders and personalities. We like ambivalent lyrics. In a way, our music has the same kind of ambivalence. (Is that an English word?) It can adopt many different meaning depending on the setting you use it in.

ing your eyes and making you believe that there's really nothing wrong with the music industry after all (her "Leaving The Army" is one of the best songs on this collection). The covers are somewhat less successful (of songs by Randy Newman, Ozzy Osbourne and Lou Reed), but there is a tremendous deep, breathy version of "The Girl on the Billboard" done by Callahan. This group of alternative, mellow story-rock songs won't be out of place on your college radio station or your player. *–MR*

The Timeout Drawer
A Difficult Future
(someoddpilot)

La Mikita Soma
Brighton Park
(someoddpilot)

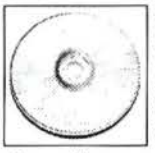
Two new releases from someoddpilot demonstrate how forward-thinking bands continue to push the boundaries of instrumental rock. The Mogwai-ian and Moog-drenched music of The Timeout Drawer is neo-space-jazz with a definitive prog-rock influence. And every bit of it floats along nicely on its own aura of ambient mystery. It's moody, tight and the closer – "Springtime Brings an Organ Grinder" – is majestic. La Makita Soma's work, by contrast, is sunnier – perhaps even funky – drawing on influences much more in line with Stereolab than a stoned supergroup of the '70s. Though they come from two different angles, neither is better than the other; both are exemplary.

Triangle
(File 13)

Quirky, melancholy music that finds inspiration from the angst of '90s indie-rock, the attitude of '80s alt-rock and a few chord changes from Billy Joel's '70s output. And I love it! Amanda Warner and Brian Tester swap lyrics with a lackadaisical notion, like the Human League's "Don't You Want Me" taking an afternoon nap. Ironic, solid pop.

The Beanweevils
The Beanweevils
(Weed)

Talk about not judging a book by its cover! I was ready to pass this off as hippie-crap from the artwork, but upon listening, I was knocked out of my chair by how good these guys are – an anti-hippie hippie band with a beautifully harmonious '60s sound that carries an evil grin and a subversive gleam in every song. "Take a Bus" is a delightfully angry Free Design-y tune and "Play!" is the folk-rock equivalent of Lords of Acid's "Pussy." "Notice Me" is a true-to-life tale of people needing attention, while "Sucker" is a hilarious ode to dumb suburban kids, from Hot Topic employees to white gangstas. This is a keeper. *–LF*



River City High
River City High Won't Turn Down
(Big Wheel Recreation)

If you like your punk rock sloppy, you'll be happy with River City High. Twelve yawn-inducing, tone-deaf tunes you've probably heard before from better bands. This is the current state of punk rock, and perhaps why I've been listening to Britney Spears lately. For al their saccharine, overproduced pseudo-coatings, they're awfully easy to listen to, especially after carbon-copy bands like River City High. Britney's "Oops, I Did It Again" has more earnest punk attitude than the whole RCH album. Plus, she's awfully easy on the eyes. Don't waste the time, energy or money. *–LF*

soundtrax

Memento
Music for and Inspired by the Film
(Thrive/Sire)

David Julyan's score for the indie hit is appropriately moody and ambient, in an unconventional manner that recalls Cliff Martinez's excellent work for *Traffic*. Though Julyan's work stands well on its own, it's complemented by a generous handful of previously released tracks from Thievery Corporation, Moby, Radiohead, Björk and others. While these songs seem to have been chosen based on title alone (example: "Snapshot" from Roni Size and Peace Orchestra's "Who Am I"), they fit tonally and thematically.

swank

Money Mark
Change Is Coming
(Emperor Norton)

Money Mark is best known as the Beastie Boys' keyboard player, but he deserves to be known on his own terms. His albums are excellent, and the latest is his best yet. It's a dozen tracks of loose and funky organ-happy tunes – most of which embody '70s cop-show cool – and are catchy from start to finish. His tracks have been the highlights of the *Red Hot* benefit albums, and they're included here so you don't have to throw away your money on those compilations, good cause or no. Consider this a great cause for the advancement of

quality music.

(The Real) Tuesday Weld
Where Psyche Meets Cupid
(Kindercore)

As demonstrated on last year's EP, (The Real) Tuesday Weld wields a special blend of pillowy lounge and antique-sounding electronics. The small dose we tasted then gives way to a satisfying 15-track meal sure to please anyone with a taste for clever lyrics, soft-pop melodies and dreamy vibes.

Dipstick
Transistor Rodeo
(Weed)

A wild trip that sounds like Hank Mancini on mescaline and mushrooms, Dipstick's *Transistor Radio* is a mostly uptempo record of delightfully twisted lounge music. "Rocket Ride" and "Candy Apple" immediately find easy grooves, though "Midnight Molé" falters like a funeral march. Seriously, 95 percent of this sounds like it could have been made 30 years ago by the likes of a Raymond Scott or Dean Elliott.

Head Jazz
(Label M)

Head Jazz is a taste of Joel Dorn's productions and other Atlantic Records classics with a focus on the groovy, surreal and trippy. Although one may categorize this collection as "acid jazz," the focus is really on the head and ears, not the dance floor. This is music for *listening*. Things start off with a loop of Eddie Harris' "Silver Cycles," edited in a such a way that the beat never stops – a continuous rhythm that fades into David Newman's soulful take on the Rolling Stones' "You Can't Always Get What You Want." The Harris track is the only one that has been messed with; the others are straight from the masters. As the CD works its way past Joe Zawinul's "Soul Of A Village," I realize it's time to go back to his *Third Stream* LP; this is the kind of compilation that will both introduce "the kids" to some classic jazz recordings and force fans like myself to go back to our record collections. While listening to the "modern sounds" of Les McCann, Yusef Lateef and Roland Kirk here, it occurs to me that the newest material featured is nearly 30 years old. That speaks volumes for both the artist and producer Dorn. There are a handful of tracks that are even before Dorn's time behind the recording desk, such as Ornette Coleman's "Ramblin'," which was layed to tape in 1959 and yet fits in with material recorded a decade later. While it's tempting to call this a collection of great grooves, again the focus comes back again to just an overall great listening experience, such as Hank Crawford's beautiful 1961 ballad "Lorelei's Lament," which segues into a 1971 Les McCann tune, "The Lovers," taken from *Invitation to Openness*, currently a favorite among dance club DJs for breaks and beats. *Head Jazz* is good for the head. *–PT*

Bertrand Burgalat
The SSSound of MMMusic
(Emperor Norton)

Just now seeing stateside issue, Burgalat's ambitious debut is pleasantly good, but not grab-you-by-the-lapels-and-shake-you good. For the most part, it's the same sort of airy, fluffy French pop he brought to his work as producer with acts like April March, though here mostly without vocals. It wears thin toward the end, but is worth a listen to those in search of modern easy listening.

wired

Arling & Cameron
We Are A&C
(Emperor Norton)

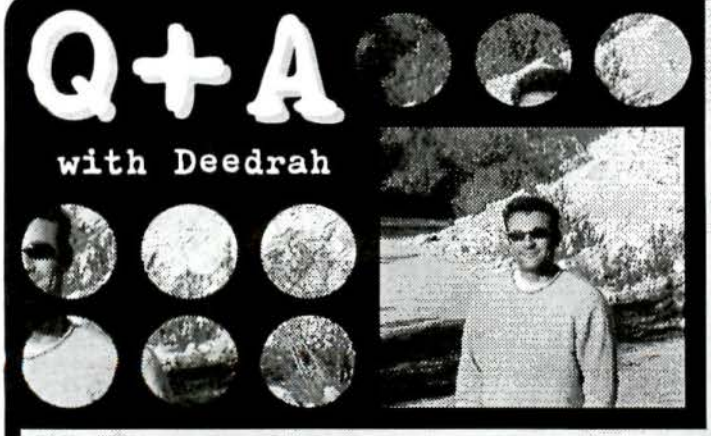
The duo's *All-In* didn't strike me greatly, but *Music for Imaginary Films* was a sonic wallop. This, luckily, leans toward the latter. Like all their efforts, it's wildly different. "5th Dimension" may be their best shot at mainstream stardom yet, an ample dose of good-humored robopop – a sound which dominates a good chunk of the record. But even better, the boys work out their Bacharach issues on a four-song string late in the game, from "Born in June" to "Sunday," each one a winner. The only real faltering point is the sign-off, entitled, um, "Don't You Fuck."

Shabaz
Shabaz
(Mondo Melodia)

Zöhar
One.Three.Seven.
(Mondo Melodia)

"We'd like to capture your minds right now – take you a little bit higher," invite Shabaz on their first disc for the Mondo Melodia label. Formerly known as the Ali Khan Band, the trio mostly succeeds, mixing up a melting pot of world-beat sounds likely to satisfy any fan of Delerium or Afro Celt Sound System. UK duo Zohar goes one better, upping the soul and infusing it with more jazz juice. The piano tinklings of "Midnight at the Bazaar" provide a loungy buzz, and

Q+A with Deedrah



So his name's not really Deedrah. But that's what you'll find his new album filed under in the stores, titled Reload.

With trance such a crowded and often generic field, how does one stand out?
Deedrah: Just be who you are and don't ask yourself questions about your market position. We are so much into our own musical and technical world that there is no space for something else. The audience is making the difference.

What's in store for the genre in the future?
Deedrah: I have no idea. Trance is just getting more and more present all over the world. Japan is big, western Europe is dead, but eastern countries are mad about it. I think this will give us more means to make better productions.

Who's at the top of their game in trance?
Deedrah: Right now, Koxbox, Juno Reactor, Antidote, X Dream, Logic Bomb, Bamboo Forest and Shpongle.

Why is instrumental music often more engaging than vocal music?
Deedrah: I don't think that at all. Instrumental tracks are more internationally understandable, that's all. Synths talk for themselves, but I believe a lot in the emotional strength of vocals.

Do you include personal themes or messages in your music or is it strictly ear candy?
Deedrah: It's never that concrete. I would compare our style with the Impressionism movement. I sometimes wish to express a particular feeling or atmosphere by the use of sounds as colors. You can translate and communicate feeling. It sounds maybe strange because trance music is often reduced to dance music, but I personally have an artistic goal in my work.

Is "Deedrah" named after any Deidre in particular? Like say, Deidre Hall from Days of Our Lives *and that show with Wilford Brimley?*
Deedrah: Deedrah is actually taken from a real Deidre, but she's not famous. Sorry.

"The Merciful One" is downright heavenly. You may not understand the words, but the groove of the music is universal.

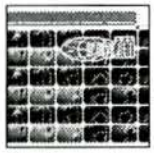
Telefon Tel Aviv
Fahrenheit Fair Enough
(Hefty)
For the most part, the electronic experimentation here is as playful as its title. Unlike some of the Hefty label's acts, it's not all just clicks and cuts, as some tracks – notably, "John Thomas on the Inside Is Nothing but Foam" – achieve real melodic warmth. It helps that acoustic instruments are married to the wired ones, making for a sound that's always interesting, even when it's not always engaging.

Goldfrapp
Utopia Genetically Enriched
(Mute)
One of the best tracks from Goldfrapp's top-notch debut *Felt Mountain* gets the single treatment, with a "genetically enriched" remix that adds some nice electronic flourishes to an already outstanding song. Following are four other versions of varying quality, from great to the pits. You also get "U.K. Girls" – an unapologetic, liberal cribbing of Olivia Newton-John's "Physical" – and two versions of "Human," one of which is sung by Calexico and the other of which proves the band sounds great live, too.

Deedrah
Reload.
(hadshcd)
This is more like it! Hard-driving KMFDM techno that makes you want to choreograph a fight scene, Yuen Woo Ping-style! The opening track, "Reload," is relentlessly energetic; "Land of Freedom," to put it simply, rocks, inspiring visions of roundhouse kicks seamlessly floating in mid-air, and "Something is Wrong With the Machinery" is a sonic neck-cracker that will leave you limp and lifeless. Overall, very cool and well worth your money. *–LF*

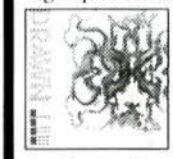
Arabian Travels
(Six Degrees)
After listening to one electronic album after another, they start to sound the same. But a Six Degrees new release is always a welcome break from the norm. This time, music from the Middle East and North Africa are blended ever-so-smoothly with entrancing electronic grooves. The opener "Kamtarie" is mixed with strings and sets the tone for the album. Dahmane El Harrachi's "Ya Rayah" is funky as they come and Arabic Breakbeats' "Blue Turban" could charm a snake into a head spin. *–LF*

Überzone
Faith in the Future
(Astralwerks)
Despite seeing his name pop up on various compilations for years, *Faith in the Future* is Überzone's first-ever LP, and it'd be difficult to muster a more auspicious debut. (Oh, it could be done, mind you; it'd just be difficult.) For his frantic, scratch-a-rific breakbeat exercises, "Q" calls on such noted guest stars as Afrika Bambbaataa, one-half of The Crystal Method and Lida Husik, whose vocals fuel "Dreamtime" to the album's highlight – one that recalls the excellent Chemical Brothers/Beth Orton collaboration from *Dig Your Own Hole*. The optimistic title track is also one meriting repeat status.



Groovejet: The Compilation
(Pagan/Ark 21)
The first of a planned series for the "more than a nightclub" Groovejet nightclub, this self-titled mix compilation isn't going to spark a revolution, but it's better than most. Rather than using original cuts from Fatboy Slim, Bent, Moloko, Groove Armada and Smoke City, house remixes are utilized. For the most part, it's on the side where the obnoxious house music doesn't reside. The Different Gear take on The Police's "When the World Is Running Down" – a huge hit in the UK, apparently – is here, as knob-twiddlers from Futureshock, Timo Maas and Mood II Swing. This is one case where the package design is groovier than the tunes inside.

Irmin Schmidt & Kumo
Masters of Confusion
(Spoon/Mute)
While Can founding member Schmidt tinkles his piano and keyboards, programmer Kumo throws out samples and beats. But while their choices of instruments may be at odds, the ways they choose to use them are not, happily. A live set of experimental *something* – not quite classical, not quite jazz, not quite electronic – this is one of those collaborations that shouldn't work but does, and remarkably so. The eight instrumental pieces are captivating, particularly "Las Plumas del Búho," which starts off fast and only grows faster as its eight-plus minutes speed by.



Brian Eno & J. Peter Schwalm
Drawn from Life
(Astralwerks)
Drawn from Life applies Eno's usual less-is-more-melodic approach to ambient music on top of a solid, slow-jazz and neo-classical foundation favored by German DJ Schwalm. Though the merger of these two proves fruitful, it's furthered even more by a few notable guests, such as avant-garde luminary Laurie Anderson. But none are more effective than the children's voices that haunt and accentuate the bubbling and orchestral swells of "Bloom," whose use of the toddlers' babbling shows up even Boards of Canada. These pieces are soundtracks, really – to films or thoughts or life.

Sebastian Tellier
L'Incroyable Vérité
(Astralwerks)
This Air-approved Parisian makes his full-length debut, and thankfully, his music is much more pleasant to listen to than his album cover is to view. Tellier's musical palette is one of simple sounds and piano plinking – largely instrumental, with a few electronic touches, but rarely approaching uptempo. It's an agreeable listen – "Kazoo III" and the previously released "Fantino" are fantastic – but not incredibly gripping or memorable when all is said and done.

S.I. Futures
The Mission Statement
(Novamute)
Si Begg – aka S.I. Futures – has a big UK hit with "We Are Not a Rock Band," but to be honest, I found it to be boring, as I did most of the album on which it's found. Despite

ff

Still feeling strangely fine, **Semisonic** whips up *All About Chemistry* (MCA), an even dozen feel-good, clean-scrubbed pop songs. Beggars Group USA offers a 10-track dose of its current roster with the sampler compilation ***Soundtrack to Summer***, boasting top-notch contributions from Lemon Jelly, Kristin Hersh, Scannerfunk, Brassy and others. One of the more notable tours this year was the Moby-masterminded ***Area One*** (BMG), commemorated here in a wild compilation of its acts, with new music from New Order, Basement Jaxx, The Crystal Method, Depeche Mode and Stereophonics but – now *this* is strange – *no Moby*. **The Dandy Warhols'** *Thirteen Tales from Urban Bohemia* (Capitol) is a pop near-masterpiece and one of the best straight alt-rock records of the past few years. So we're late to the party, but you know this *No Angel* (Arista) from **Dido** thing? We like it lots. Really. The latest entry in Instinct's *After Hours* compilation series is ***Loungin' After Hours***, an appropriately swank treatment of martini-drenched trip-hop, featuring Jimpster, Flavornaughts, Spy Hunta and more people you probably haven't heard of but should. I'm not sure what to make of **Zeke's Wedding All-Stars'** *Do Carmen & Martial* (Zeke), so I won't even try. **Big Ray and the Futuras'** *Desolation Planet* (Double Crown) is a modern surf-rock standout, with the band doing that yesteryear-and-tomorrow space-sound thing, and quite well.

an awesome design and theme, the music can't match the otherworldly flight plan set up for it, stumbling awkwardly between intelligent dance music and repetitive stupid thumping. There are maybe two good tracks ("Assault on Precinct 14" being one), but the record also continues the annoying trend of recruiting rappers for vocal chores. *Mission*: unlistenable.

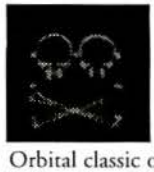
Awaken
(Immergent)
I was hoping this compilation would suck, because I had so many plays on words ready to go along with the title. But this album doesn't suck – as a matter of fact, it kicks ass. "Terraform" by Divine Styler is a funky-as-hell, cerebral hip-hop tune; "Time Bomb" by the hit-or-miss Rabbit in the Moon suitably rocks the house; and my personal favorite, Relm's "Revenge of the Nerd," scratches more than a kid with chicken pox. Other tracks by Api, OMID and Mount Cyanide also do the job. *–LF*

Immediate Action
(Hefty)
Immediate Action is a duly impressive double-disc set, compiling all of Hefty's limited-edition 12" singles released on vinyl last year. Now those of us without turntables (not to mention the time to track such stuff down) can enjoy among the finest the Chicago label has to offer, heavy on minimalist electronica and experimental ambience. John Hughes (son of *the* John Hughes) sees his *Scarlet Diva* soundtrack remixed to fine effect by the likes of Telefon Tel Aviv and Twine. Highlights include Slicker remixing The Aluminum Group, the works of Retina.IT and the aforementioned Hughes tracks, but the package is a winner all around.

The Chemical Brothers
It Began in Afrika
(Astralwerks)
If this EP – a mere taste of their upcoming LP – is any indication, then damn, is that going to be one fine LP. Beginning with a documentarian-like voice whose speaks the title, "It Began in Afrika" pulsates into the Chems' patented melodic big-beat sound, here accentuated with tribal rhythms, percussion and other apropos odes to the continent that sure beats the hell out of Toto. It's followed immediately by an extended, eight-minute version – just as rocking, but with doorbells. Closing out is the generically but accurately titled "Hot Acid Rhythm 1," which may be even better than "Afrika."

Stereolab
Sound-Dust
(Elektra)
Keeping with their release-a-year strategy, the prolific Stereolab returns as promised with *Sound-Dust*. It doesn't really have the same sound as their past few have, which you'll think is bad when it opens with "Black Ants in Sound," one of their weakest efforts in years. But as soon as "Space Moth" follows, everything's groovy and bubbly and intoxicating. Unofficial member Sean O'Hagan seems to be getting his paws on things more and more, as the soft-country influences of the single "Captain Easychord" are most assuredly his and his alone. The flutes were probably his idea, too, so welcome to the groop. This is not a starting point for the uninitiated, but the 'Lab cult will find their love undaunted.

DJ Irene
Globalhousediva 2: Live in Ibiza
(Strictly Hype)
Irene spins 31 (!) tracks in a set that's certainly a hard-driving, head-banging assault, but still lacking in any real personality. I mean, almost anyone's name could be on this. Fatboy Slim, Bedrock and Delerium are among the artists used, all tied seamlessly, but this is strictly one for the pacifiers-and-Teletubbies-backpack crowd.



Orbital
The Altogether
(FFRR)
While no song here may be an Orbital classic on the level of "Chime" or "The Box," *The Altogether* is a strong album for the brothers, much more satisfying than its iffy predecessor, *Middle of Nowhere*. "Tension" finds them on familiar ground, twitching beats while working in a wicked sense of humor, here mixing in "Surfin' Bird." The hit "Funny Break" is better, and lighter. I also liked "Doctor?" – a reworking of the geeky *Dr. Who* TV theme – and "Illuminate," a collaboration with David Gray. You definitely get your money's worth, as *The Altogether* comes packaged with (at least for now) a bonus disc of 11 remixes, unreleased tracks and B-sides – all of varying quality, but nice to have, especially for cash-strapped completists.

cd of the moment, too

American Boyfriends
What Love Can Be...
(Sunshine Factory)
The Oklahoma City-based American Boyfriends' debut, *What Love Can Be...*, is just the dose of power pop I've been waiting for – an antidote to all the bubblegum crap currently littering the airwaves. If nothing else, try track three, "Supergirl." It's simply an *amazing* piece of work – a perfect four-minute pop song – beautifully crafted, intelligently written and most important, richly melodic. Radio wouldn't have such a bad rap if it got back to playing such things, and it's clearly a hit single in the waiting. It's my favorite song of this year, and has been ever since I first heard it early this summer. It's the kind of dreamy, intellipop that XTC excels in, delivered in an energy reminiscent of Pixies; in other words, it goes straight to your head and sticks there. But enough about "Supergirl"; there are plenty of other gems to crack your teeth on. Foremost among them is "New Year's Day," a misunderstood-love song that explodes into a joyous New Year's celebration at its end, bells and all. It's so wonderfully orchestrated, it works like a charm. I'm also in love with the simple and serious "New York City," as well as the looser, irony-laced "Lazy Boy" (*"This couldn't wait for a commercial break? / But baby I don't have time for that when* Days of Our Lives *is on"*). You have to admire an album that can make the jump from unadulterated, sci-fi-rock ("Teenage U.F.O. Rock & Roll Monster Show," using *Godzilla 2000* snippets) to a slow, methodical ballad (the title track) and make love to your ears all along the way. And dammit, I do.

Curve
Gift
(Hip-O)
It's been several years since British electronica duo Curve

▸▸58

edited by Rod Lott

A WORD FROM THE MANAGEMENT...

Videos reviewed in **HITCH** receive star ratings based not on artistic merit, but on levels of enjoyment, from ★☆☆☆☆ (as much fun as a funeral) to ★★★★★ (fun, fun, fun 'til daddy takes the TV away).

RENT-O-MATIC

6 Entirely Random Horror Movies with Numbers in Their Titles

- *7 Doors of Death* (1981, N/A)
- *Two Evil Eyes* (1990, Video Treasures)
- *Dementia 13* (1963, Goodtimes Home Video)
- *Dracula A.D. 1972* (1972, Warner Home Video)
- *976-EVIL* (1988, New Line Home Video)
- *Children of the Corn 666: Isaac's Return* (1999, Dimension Home Video

Tokyo Raiders
(2000)
Columbia/Tristar Home Video
★★★☆☆

In Japan, a private eye (Tony Leung, emitting a serious Peter Coyote vibe) assembles a team of various strangers – including interior decorator Ekin Cheng and cute jilted bride Kelly Chen – to bring down a couple of corrupt businessmen in a counterfeit currency ring. Much kicking ensues.

The action scenes would have been even better if they were allowed to play out. As they stand, director Jingle Ma (*The Legend of Drunken Master*) switches speeds, pauses and even reverses the action, sometimes in the same shot. The whole movie is shot this way, actually, like a Mountain Dew commercial. It's enough to make you wonder if Michael Bay has kin in the Far East, or just that much influence.

One of two standout scenes has Leung on a gas-powered skateboard, which leads to some good-ol'-fashioned three-on-one fisticuffs atop a moving semi transporting new cars. I can't remember the other one.

Just to remind you you're not watching an American film, they all take a break to eat noodles. But what's with all the Latin music on the soundtrack? It's even more distracting than the awkward dialogue translations ("With bodies like that, you could be in a porno! Right, pussycats?" or "My bodyguard is here! And he's hairy! Like a gorilla!")

Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!
(1965)
RM Video
★★★★☆

Beneath the Valley of the Ultra-Vixens
(1979)
RM Video
★★☆☆☆

Interesting that *Faster, Pussycat*, the one film the breast-obsessed Russ Meyer is most famous for keeps the objects of his desire covered. That's not to say the film isn't tipping over with wall-to-wall cleavage, though.

The top-heavy triumvirate of Tura Satana, Lori Williams and Haji headline this fast, gritty, no-brains-necessary romp, racing their cars with reckless abandon and killing guys for no good reason. One such act of murder leaves them saddled with the dead's sobbing girlfriend (Sue Bernard), whom they take hostage until they can figure out what to do with her.

They come across a farmhouse family of men, reportedly sitting on a fortune. Smelling the irresistible combo of easy money and easier males, the girls use their assets to their advantage in an attempt to rob them blind. Most of them seem pretty willing, except for the old coot of a patriarch, who's wheelchair-bound.

Nothing goes as planned, obviously, resulting in a veritable spree

of comic-book violence, with tragic consequences at every turn. If it's not a knife in a back, it's a speeding car running over your body. Something this simple-minded would be something to laugh *at*, rather than laugh *with*, if Meyer weren't a skilled director and editor. He keeps things flying, and every other line out of a character's mouth is priceless.

Seriously, all this movie is missing are color and nipples.

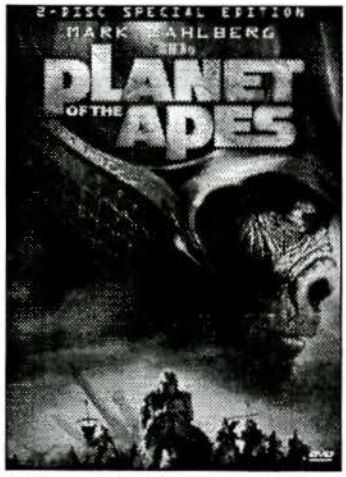
You get color and nipples (and thatches and phalluses) in the later *Beneath the Valley of the Ultra-Vixens*, but it's a sick, sloppy movie set in Smalltown, U.S.A. Its plot concerns a guy who can't, in one character's own words, "look a fuck straight in the eye." Meanwhile, his wife, the melon-breasted but dog-faced Kitten Natavidad, does every guy in town. There is a litany of various other characters, like a horny door-to-door lingerie salesman, a horny fat woman who runs a junkyard and a horny religious radio station DJ who has massive globes in her shirt and likes to play Pong when not smacking her gum and doing a striptease for her German paramour, who gets off by watching this from underneath a sheet with eyeholes, lying in a coffin, as "Give Me That Ol' Time Religion" plays on the turntable. If only the rest of the movie were that inventive.

Whereas *Pussycat* moves like a race car, *Ultra-Vixens* makes its way like the garbage truck it features, in which one atrocious couple does it amidst discarded salad. The Meyer staples are there – visual puns, clever editing, large bustlines – but the more explicit it gets, the more uninspired it seems. (And it does get explicit – witness the burning of one guy's scrotum with a light bulb.)

Planet of the Apes
(2001)
20th Century Fox Home Entertainment
★★★☆☆

The only way to truly enjoy Tim Burton's "reimagining" of the sci-fi classic is to *not* compare it to the 1968 original, because there's no way it could come close. Heck, it's not even as good as the fourth sequel, *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*, generally considered to be the absolute worst of the franchise.

On this *Planet*, Mark Wahlberg (née Marky) stars as an astronaut who hits a time ripple when he goes searching for his lost chimp. No, I'm dead serious. Instead of happily reuniting with his simian pal, he crash-lands on a planet where – wait for it – apes talk! And rule!



Unfortunately, Ape City looks like a set lifted from *Hook*, and all the goings-on we see here – apes playing basketball, getting haircuts, doing drugs – are flat-out stupid.

It isn't until the second hour when the film actually picks up steam and gets good, with Marky on the run from villainous General Thade (a terrific Tim Roth) and his gorilla armies. Joining Marky are luscious babe Estella Warren (think Nova in a Wonderbra) and compassionate orangutan Helena Bonham Carter (in a rare non-smoking role).

Lots of people scratched their heads over the love-it-or-hate-it ending. I happen to love it. It made me want to see the inevitable sequel right then and there. It's a few years off, I'm sure, but here's hoping its story is more compelling than this one.

Burton's got the visuals down and keeps the action sequences tight, but is once again hampered by his usual undeveloped script downfall. Rick Baker's makeup is great as expected, but that only goes so far in the compensation department.

Godzilla vs. Space Godzilla
(1994)
Columbia/Tristar Home Video
★★★☆☆

Godzilla fights Space Godzilla, who looks exactly like Godzilla, but with icicles protruding from his back. There's also a robot Godzilla named Mogera. And a cameo from Mothra and its twin fairies, who have a psychic link with a Japanese girl who looks like Peter Pan. And for what it's worth, Baby Godzilla is in it, too, just to up the upchuck factor.

It's fun alright, but not as fun as other recent entries in the series, particularly *Godzilla 2000*. But it's also too damn long for its good and drier than usual, so it starts feeling stale.

Police Story 2
(1988)
New Line Home Video
★★★★☆

The Prisoner
(1991)
Columbia/Tristar Home Video
★★★☆☆

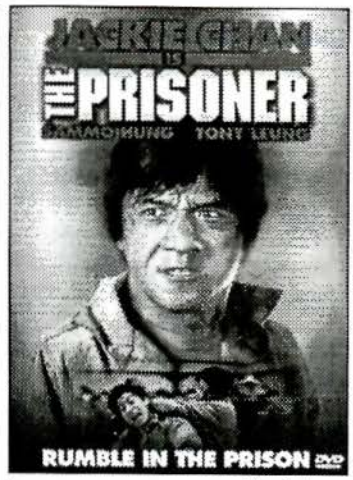
Mr. Nice Guy
(1998)
New Line Home Video
★★★★★

In *Police Story 2*, a sequel (obviously) to *Police Story* (or *Police Force*) and prequel to *Supercop*, Jackie Chan resigns from the force after the bad guys from the first one harass and threaten (and eventually kidnap) his shrill-voiced girlfriend, since the letter of the law won't allow him to take proper revenge. But when a bomber starts to strike around town, the force demands Jackie return to help.

Early on, there's a terrific fight in a restaurant, where no dish is spared. Later, Jackie fights about eight guys single-handedly in a park, using all the playground equipment he can to his advantage. There's even a deaf mute who chases Jackie and his partner around with explosive-equipped radio-controlled cars, and later throws little bombs on Jackie during a fight, which keeps lighting him on fire! Nothing could top the original's mall-set free-for-all, but the action sequences here are still awesome.

Despite billing on the video box that reads "*Jackie Chan is The Prisoner*," Jackie is *not* the star of *The Prisoner*, and not only that, but he's only one of about 100 prisoners. So if you can accept that this is not your typical JC film – in fact, it's more of a prison drama than an action blockbuster – you might enjoy it.

The Prisoner has a loose feel to it that suggests it's been cobbled together from a TV series. It hasn't, but you get the idea; it's poorly scripted. There are no new ideas



here – some are even lifted from superior lockdown movies, like *Cool Hand Luke*'s breasts-washing-the-car scene or the eat-all-the-eggs bit (or rice, as the case is here, naturally).

What there is of a plot centers around Tony Leung, undercover as a prisoner to thwart a crooked warden. Or maybe it centers around Sammo Hung, who's always trying to escape to visit his towheaded son. Or then again, maybe it centers around Jackie, who's thrown behind bars after accidentally killing a guy during a post-gambling brawl, trying to raise money for his girlfriend's life-saving liver operation. I don't know, and I think *The Prisoner* doesn't know, either. It totally falls apart in the last 20 minutes, which comes so far out of nowhere, you'll think perhaps 20 preceding minutes were excised in its move stateside.

In *Mr. Nice Guy*, Chan plays a guy named Jackie (*again?*), a popular TV cooking show host who accidentally becomes entangled in a case involving greasy, sneering and well-dressed evil guys who like to kill guiltlessly.

Cue the action, which is very good in this bright, colorful film. Three set pieces stand out: a chase through a mall, a construction-site brawl and, at the end, when Jackie destroys Bad Guy's impressive house with a giant dump truck.

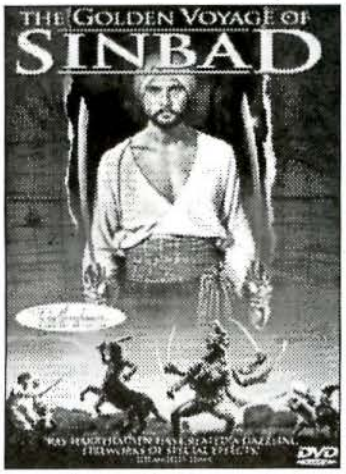
Directed by Sammo Hung (who cameos as an unlucky biker), this is one of the few non-American Chan vehicles shot in English. Once again, he's got the whiny, put-upon, insanely jealous and astonishingly defenseless girlfriend to rescue, but I myself prefer the pretty redheaded journalist who runs around in her underwear (and somehow manages to pull a disappearing act in Act

III).

The Golden Voyage of Sinbad
(1973)
Columbia/Tristar Home Video
★★☆☆☆

Barbarella and *Danger: Diabolik* star John Philip Law took over Sinbad's sword and sash for this second of the three *Sinbad* films produced and animated by the rightfully lauded Ray Harryhausen.

For this *Voyage*, Sinbad comes into possession of a golden amulet that falls from the sky. As he discovers, it's also a nautical map that leads he and his crew to a mythical

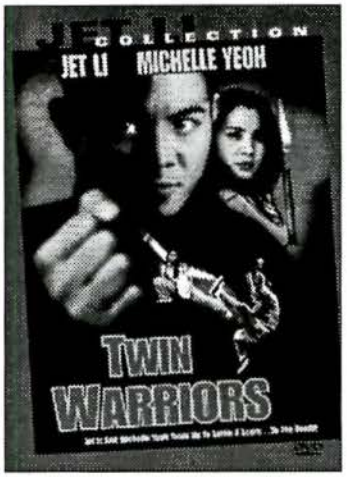


city, where a kingdom and all its riches are at stake. Accompanying him on the journey is the luscious slave girl Caroline Munro, who gives off serious R-rated vibes for a G-rated picture. On their trail is an evil sorcerer (Tom Baker), who uses black magic to thwart Sinbad and retrieve the amulet.

Along the way, there are flying bat-things, a wooden figurehead come to life, a six-armed dancing statue, a Cyclops-horse-thingie, an invisible swordsman and what they call a "griffin." Got me. Yet despite all these Harryhausen creations, the film lags and suffers from pedestrian pacing.

Down to Earth
(2001)
Paramount Home Video
★☆☆☆☆

In this update of *Heaven Can Wait*, Chris Rock is a recently deceased bicycle messenger and aspiring stand-up comic (hmmm, imagine that) who gets the chance to inhabit the body of a racist white billionaire. Hilarity does not ensue. Rock can be a funny guy, but not here. In fact, this lame-ass flick contains exactly as many laughs as there paragraphs in this review. Minus one.



Twin Warriors
(1994)
Dimension Home Video
★★★★★

Two boys studying kung fu at a Shaolin temple grow up to be bitter enemies. One (Jet Li) is a good guy, fighting for the common man. The other one (not Jet Li), is not a good guy, a bloodthirsty guard working for the corrupt government. Despite the title, they're not twins, but *Pal Warriors* doesn't exactly have the same ring to it. (Actually, its overseas title is *Tai Chi Master*, but that sounds like a job title on a senior citizens cruise.)

Li teams up with Michelle Yeoh to overthrow the government, and together and separately, they bust some heads, in that glorious, bloody, hyper-real, physics-defying, balls-out wire-fu stuff that you just can't tire of seeing. The movie briefly becomes a comedy when Li loses his memory and thinks he's a duck, but soon he discovers a new fighting style and the ass-kicking starts all over again. This movie kicks so much ass that it has to wipe its feet.

Tales of Frankenstein
(2001)
All Day Entertainment
★★★★☆

The Horror of Hammer
(2001)
All Day Entertainment
★★★★★

The DVD archivists at All Day Entertainment have assembled a dream disc for Frankenstein collectors, anchored by the unsold 1958 Hammer TV pilot, *Tales of Frankenstein* (itself reviewed in **HITCH** 7).

The show is unremarkable, but a nice novelty, and supported by nearly two dozen trailers from various Frankenstein films. You get the Universal classic and its sequels, the Hammer films (*The Curse of Frankenstein*), the AIPs (*How to Make a Monster*), the comedies (*Munster, Go Home*) and the camp (*Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster*). Though quality varies, the previews offer a nice representation of the monster's cinematic legacy.

Even further, there are bloopers from *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein*; excerpts from Lon Chaney's appearance on *Tales of Tomorrow*; interviews with Boris Karloff, Peter Cushing and Hammer's Michael Carreras; and, for no apparent reason, a hilariously un-PC animated drive-in cartoon for ice cream. To see where it all began, the DVD also contains the full text of Mary Shelley's original novel.

Even better is All Day's *The Horror of Hammer*, sporting *fifty-freakin'-three* trailers of the beloved Gothic horror and outrageous sci-fi flicks of Britain's Hammer Studios. Pretty much every Hammer film is represented (*She* is the only one that sticks out in my mind as absent), including such classics as *Captain Kronos, Vampire Hunter* and *Curse of the Mummy's Tomb*.

Rather than chronologically, the disc is divided into themes, starting with all the Frankensteins, then hitting the sci-fi (*X the Unknown*), the Satanists and undead (*Plague of the Zombies*), the mummy movies, various other creatures (*The Gorgon*) and finally, the popular Dracula series. The disc uncovers more than a few gems, including the *Exorcist*/*Omen* clone *To the Devil a Daughter* and the horror/kung-fu hybrid *The Seven Brothers and Their Sister Meet Dracula*.

Bonus materials include four alternate trailers, an audio commentary and two short subjects, one of Christopher Lee as he films *Dracula A.D. 1972* and the other on Michael Carreras' search for new flesh, which he finds in the form in Victoria Vetri, star of *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*. And what a form it is! The girl jiggles and shakes so much, she makes *The Blair Witch Project* look like Steadicam.

Rush Hour 2
(2001)
New Line Home Video
★★★★☆

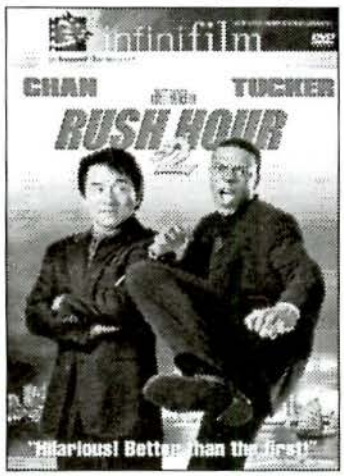
Rush Hour's biggest revelation was that Chris Tucker could be on screen without making one wince for an hour and a half. In *Rush Hour 2*, his role is expanded, making him

Frank gets Hammer-ed in Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell.

a tad more annoying. Luckily, it doesn't detract *too* much from the enjoyment, and while *RH2* isn't *quite* as good as the original, it's pretty much on par, even if it seems scripted on the spot.

Turning the original film's premise on its head, Tucker's loud-mouthed L.A. cop Carter becomes the fish out of water when he vacations in Hong Kong. His old buddy Li (Jackie Chan), however, has other plans, enlisting his help in solving a bombing case that involves the triads. To tell the truth, it feels underwritten – a mere loose framework for the action sequences. But when said action sequences let Chan bust loose his stuff, who's complaining?

As a bonus, *Crouching Tiger's* Ziyi Zhang is a scruffy yet super-hot villain with a mean kick. There's more fighting this time round, which is a plus, but paradoxically, they've reduced Chan's dialogue, even though his English is better than what it was three years ago.



As was the case with the first film, the funniest parts are to be found in the end-credit outtakes.

Hellraiser: Inferno
(2001)
Dimension Home Video
★★★★☆

You know, I've never met a person who has said, "I can't *wait* until they make another *Hellraiser* movie!," but they must be out there, because they keep crankin' 'em out. Having taken a bath with the director-disowned *Hellraiser: Bloodline* a few years back, Miramax has sent this one straight to video.

Strangely, it's actually pretty good. The always-repugnant Craig Sheffer plays a coke-snortin', whore-bangin' L.A. detective who likes to solve puzzles. So when he comes across that infernal puzzle box, you know he just *has* to open that shit right up. Within hours, people around him are turning up dead and he's having visions of freaky-ass Cenobites running around and trying to sex him up.

Hey, Craig Sheffer: We think that new look quite suits you!

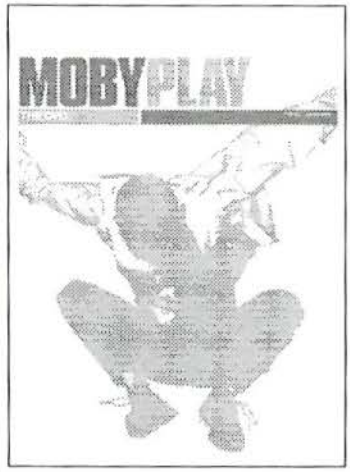
Even stranger, ol' Pinhead (Doug Bradley) has a mere four minutes of screen time, barely qualifying this one as a *Hellraiser* sequel at all – which is probably a good thing, as the first few sure didn't light my fire. Directed by Scott Derrickson with more flair than you'd expect, it generates creeps by leaving a lot to your imagination. Unfortunately, they also leave the payoff to your imagination, too, as the final act makes not a lick of sense.

But if you've ever wanted to see Sheffer with half a dozen hooks ripping his face apart, *Hellraiser: Inferno* answers your prayers.

Moby: Play the DVD
(2001)
V2 Records
★★★★☆

Most – but not quite all – of the videos from Moby's breakthrough album *Play* are presented here on this ambitious DVD. From a proto-*Memento* number to Christina Ricci as an angel, they're all pretty good.

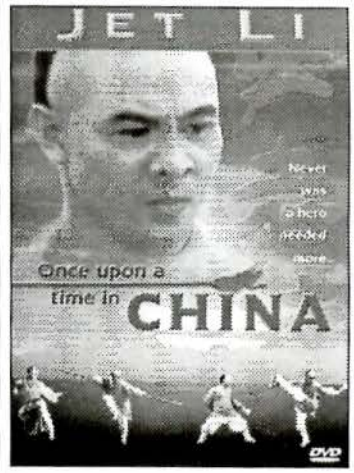
You also get 20 minutes or so of Moby fooling around with accents (and growing increasingly tiresome) with some behind-the-scenes tour footage, half a dozen live performances from a UK show (which illustrate his predilection for suggestively stroking a microphone) and a 90-minute "megamix" accompanied by mind-bending computer visuals (likely constructed for the chemically impaired).



Once Upon a Time in China
(1991)
Columbia/Tristar Home Video
★★★☆☆

In his breakthrough role, Jet Li stars as Chinese folk hero Wong Fei-Hung, in a historical epic set in 19th century China. During a time of political upheaval and increasing influence by Western nations, the good doctor Wong brings it upon himself to act as a defender of both the common man and their shared heritage, which the Westerners take as a threat. Fights ensue.

With terrific direction from Tsui Hark and Li as a leading man, this film should be great. But the characters are so ill-defined, it's difficult to understand in *any* language. The story meanders and skips all over the place, with the viewer left confused about who's who and what's what. Ultimately, this means that *Once's* success rests with the fighting sequences, and they are incredible – but largely relegated to the second half. Not surprisingly, that's when the film really comes alive, especially in a tussle atop several ladders.



Five Deadly Venoms
(1978)
Beverly Wilshire Filmworks
★★☆☆☆

Presumably a well-regarded kung-fu classic, *Five Deadly Venoms* refers to the members of the Poison clan – skilled kung-fu warriors each versed in his own distinct style, named after an insect or reptile. Each hides his identity under a way-cool mask also reflective of his name – Snake, Centipede, Scorpion, Lizard and Toad.

The patriarch of the Poison clan is near-death and convinces his current pupil to locate the Venoms and get rid of any who may be using their skills for evil. Ten minutes into this, I was practically salivating with anticipation. Ten minutes later, I was yawning all too frequently.

The problem? There's not a lot of action, and what action there is takes place largely sans masks. I wanted to see an all-out kickfest between guys in their bad-ass masks, but it never happens. This is merely standard chopsocky, with a killer concept tossed out the win-

dow.

Supercop 2
(1993)
Dimension Home Video
★★★☆☆

A *Supercop* spin-off prequel that gives Michelle Yeoh her own starring vehicle, *Supercop 2* is a bit of a disappointment, as well as being more than a bit of a misnomer, given that the original *Supercop* was actually *Police Story 3*.

Reprising her role as Inspector Jessica Yang, Yeoh helps bust a crime ring that, unbeknownst to her, is headed by her on-again/off-again boyfriend David. Lucky for us, she gets to kick a lot of people, most memorably a hulking bad guy who appears to be eight feet tall. Unlucky for her, she has to spend most

of the movie wearing an unfashionable white beret. (But at least it's better than the cop who wears a hooded sweatshirt that appears to advertise Popeye's Fried Chicken.)

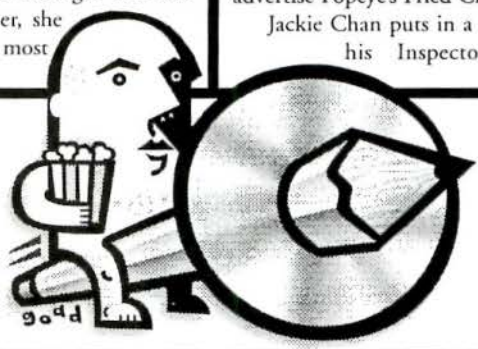
Jackie Chan puts in a cameo as his Inspector Chan character, here undercover, in drag and using a novelty laughing skull for a breast. (Oh, that Asian humor!) There's also a nifty, hairpin car chase sequence, even if it was likely lifted from *Basic Instinct*. But it's not quite enough to make this as involving and exciting as it should be.

Osmosis Jones
(2001)
Warner Home Video
★★☆☆☆

This Farrelly Brothers live-action/animation mix looked like a can't-miss marriage of *Fantastic Voyage* and *There's Something about Mary*. Unfortunately, it's a less-than-*Fantastic Voyage* with the comedic flair of *Say It Isn't So*.

On the human side, Bill Murray stars as a depressed, widowed, cholesterol-laden zookeeper whose body flirts with a fatal infection after he eats an egg from the bottom of a monkey cage. The fight within is animated, with rookie blood cell cop Osmosis Jones (voiced by Chris Rock) teaming up with an over-the-counter capsule (David Hyde Pierce) to rid Bill of the nasty virus (Laurence Fishburne). There's some good voice work there, but they unwisely cast Brandy, too.

Though the animation is quite good, there's no great story to juice it along. You get the expected bodily function jokes, but only a few hit. The Farrellys also toss in their patented gross-outs on the live-action side (like Murray upchucking *and* exploding a zit on Molly Shannon), but the timing is far from impeccable. It feels like everyone kind of went about it half-assed, never giving it their all.

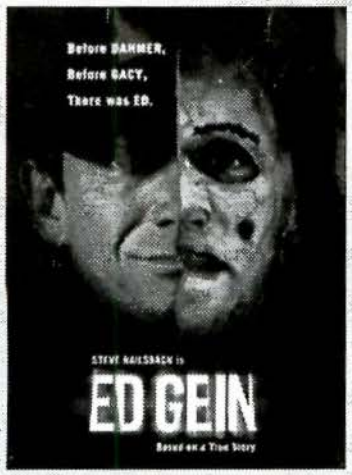


DVDemented!
By Richard York

Matt Goad

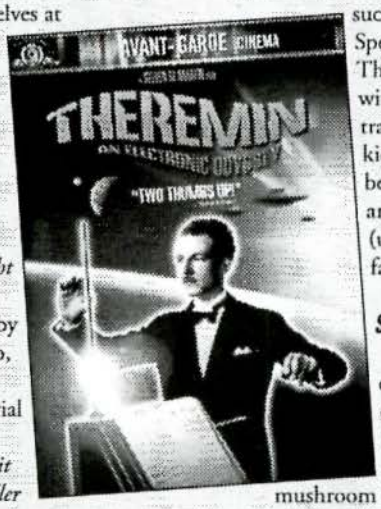
Ed Gein

I would've thought that a film named after the real-life character that inspired many great films (*Psycho*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, et al) would've been a little more exciting. But it's a fairly dull, straightforward biography of the insane killer. Ed Gein has killed and desecrated a handful of Wisconsin town folk at the posthumous behest of his saintly mother. Eventually he's caught and put in a mental hospital.



It's 86 minutes of not much. There's lots of dialogue but little drama, which is, I reckon, pretty much how real life operates. The performances are all pretty good (Steve Railsback, with his glued-on smile, was a great choice for Gein). I was expecting something a little more gruesome, but all the deaths happen pretty much off-screen, despite its lack of a rating. There are some shocks, though, like Gein's unseemly memento of his mother and his dancing around in a woman's skin. It's a lot like *The Silence of the Lambs* without the suspense.

I'd seen this on the shelves at videos stores and was naturally curious. I just thought I'd tell you about it in case you were curious, too. The DVD has very little (a trailer and Spanish subtitles) and is not letterboxed. It was originally titled *In the Light of the Moon* and directed by Chuck Parello, whose only other directorial effort was *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer 2*.



Theremin: An Electronic Odyssey

An oddly constructed and frustrating documentary. Part of MGM's "Avant-Garde Cinema" line, *Theremin* is about the otherworldly instrument named after its inventor, Russian scientist Leon Theremin. The instrument itself never really rose above novelty status and has been used as such by many musicians since, including the Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations" to such modern opportunists as Jon Spencer and Mercury Rev. Theremin's is a story loaded with drama, but none of it translates here, what with being kidnapped by the KGB and believed to be dead for years and then suddenly returning (untriumphantly here). A big, fat disappointment.

Syd Barrett's First Trip

Exploitation at its weirdest. Nigel Gordon, a film student/friend of Barrett's, filmed what was supposedly the Pink Floyd founder's first mushroom trip in 1966. That's all well and good, but the fact that someone released this on DVD seems creepy, especially considering that Barrett would become an acid casualty a year or so later. The 10-minute DVD itself is a somewhat hypnotic curiosity piece, but it's really just sad. The saddest part? Paying a dollar a minute for this DVD.

Maniac

I was never a huge fan of William Lustig's *Maniac*, so I surprised myself when I went ahead and bought the DVD. But this disc

The Night Before
(1988)
HBO Home Video

★★☆☆☆

What if they made Martin Scorsese's brilliant *After Hours* into a teen comedy? They did, and it was called *The Night Before*, and time has not been kind to it, not that it was such a success in the first place.

In one of the first in a string of utterly goofy roles for the helium-headed Keanu Reeves, he plays a nerdy high school kid who wakes up in the middle of the night in downtown L.A., and can't remember anything. He soon learns, however – in a reverse-flashback sort of thing that certainly doesn't put it on the level of *Memento* – that's he lost his car and sold his prom date (a bitchy and porcelain doll-looking Lori Loughlin) to a pimp named Tito.

Since you never really care for Keanu, your interest in seeing this through wanes as it goes on, well past its welcome. There are some laughs, but unfortunately, they come not from what Keanu says, but how he says it. This should only one star, but you get a graciously extended scene in the third act that Loughlin plays in her underwear.

RoboCop: Prime Directives
(2000)
N/A

★★☆☆☆

Some enterprising Canadians thought they could revive the out-of-commission *RoboCop* franchise with a four-part miniseries that essentially serves as *RoboCop 4* through *7*. Trouble is, they're so obviously Canadian (read: production values of your average Cinemax soft-core porn flick) that they make *RoboCop 3* look like *The Seven Samurai*.

It recycles all the tongue-in-cheek futuristic elements of the series (like the satirical newscasts), only makes them suck. RoboCop (now played by virtual unknown Page Fletcher) isn't even allowed by current OCP rules to carry a gun, but he does anyway, but it doesn't always prove effective against his adversaries, including a fat guy with a skull-like mask who calls himself Bone Machine. Hey, don't ruin the Pixies song for me.

Don't get me wrong – I'd love to see the RoboCop character resurrected for a screen big or small. But this effort doesn't have *enough* effort to do it successfully, much less interestingly.

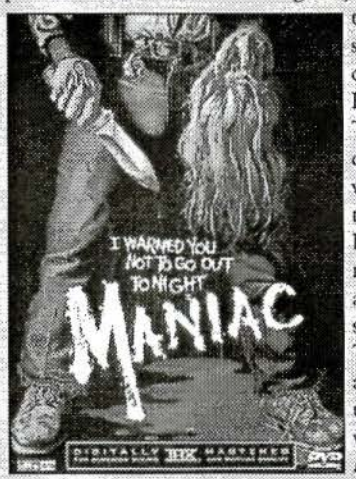
Blow Out
(1981)
Warner Home Video

★★★★☆

Of all of Brian DePalma's Hitchcock porn shows – and there are many – the underrated *Blow Out* is one of the very best. A then-steeply-declining John Travolta stars as a B-movie sound effects man who inadvertently records a car careening off a cliff into a lake, presumably because of a blowout.

But after rescuing a prostitute (Nancy Allen, of course) from the vehicle and learning that its dead driver was a governor, he becomes obsessed with the tape, hearing a gunshot before the blowout and thus delving into an assassination plot that few believe and even less are willing to admit.

While he doesn't really act here, Travolta should be pursuing more roles like this, because he's believable and likable, as opposed to bloated and repugnant. Though again hampered by a flighty Pino Donaggio score, DePalma, as expected, throws out all his tricks, succeeds in what DVD's are supposed to do: spark interest, so that the next time you watch it, you appreciate it 10 times more. It's still not a perfect film, but the loving tribute to the star (the very good, 51-minute *The Joe Spinnell Story*) and the commentary both provide the insight I needed to justify my purchase.



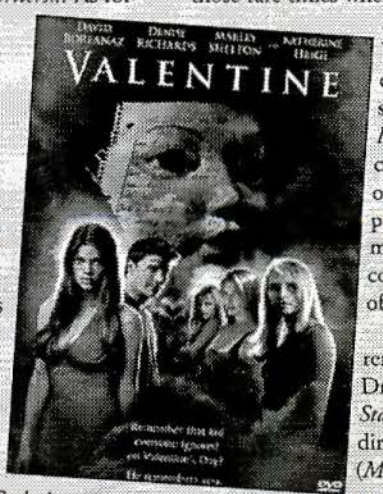
The commentary (with Lustig, SFXpert Tom Savini and Spinnell's assistant/partner Luke Walter) is loaded with interesting information and trivia (Lustig is the nephew of Jake LaMotta!). Lustig talks about the film's controversy with the National Organization for Women and Walker tells touching and funny stories about Spinnell.

If you have even a faint interest in this film, I think you would enjoy this DVD. Also available in one of Anchor Bay's dubious "special" limited edition tins.

Valentine

I think Denise Richards looks ridiculous. She looks like a cartoon of a pretty girl, some 13-year-old's fantasy-girl drawing. Exaggerated facial features, perpetual toothiness; she looks post-op. The only place that face works is in the plastic world of Paul Verhoeven (see *Starship Troopers*). Fuck Denise Richards.

Anyway, *Valentine* is an annoying teen slasher film, like in the days of old where people do all sorts of stupid things – *anything* to further the plot. And when all is said and done, nothing truly makes sense. Especially the ending, which exists solely because we've been constantly misled. Everyone's annoying. They're plastic people with cookie-cutter characters which ultimately renders them faceless (David Boreanez is the only other name and face I remember and I'm not sure I even spelled his name right). The dialogue is clichéd and dopey. Thinking back to the credits, I come away with one question: *This took four writers?!?* As for DVD extras, who cares?



Ring 2

After seeing the awesome Japanese horror film *Ring* (reviewed last issue), I had to get my grubby hands on the sequel. When I was in the market, it hadn't yet been released on Region 2 DVD, but it was out on VCD. I was new to the VCD world and was hesitant to give it any serious thought. But the average price is about $10, so I figured what the hell.

So once I got it, my hesitations turned out to be justified. Anyone who has any experience with the shitty videotapes of Tai Seng, the Asian video distributor, will know exactly what to expect. It's basically some slapped-together print, grainy and split up over two discs, averaging roughly 45 minutes per disc. It looks like something you might find being sold on the streets with the bootleg videos of the newest theatrical releases. VCDs are like an expensive rental. Once I finally get the R2 DVD, I won't have any problem tossing my VCD in the trash.

But I did finally get to see the film, squinting my way through it, trying to make heads or tails of the faded subtitles. It's actually a very worthy sequel which helps explain some stuff from the original, including the images in the cursed videotape. Plus, there are plenty of genuine scares. Great stuff.

So I would consider VCDs a last resort for those rare times when a foreign film just isn't available on DVD yet. VCDs play on just about every DVD player and I suggest you get the two *Ring* films on VCD. It's cheaper than just about all of the bootleg video companies I originally recommended, though I never compared it to the quality of the tape.

Update: The stateside remake of *Ring* from Dreamworks will be called *Static*. It will (reportedly) be directed by Gore Verbinski (*MouseHunt, The Mexican*) and will have special make-up effects by the ubiquitous Rick Baker. God knows what that collaboration will reap. H

from the split-screens to the 360°s, and manages to whip up more than enough suspense to keep you entwined. His final scene, however, is probably sicker than the drill-kill from *Body Double*.

Iron Monkey
(1993)
Miramax Home Video
★★★★★

Even though it's eight years old, I'd never seen *Iron Monkey* before Miramax recently released it. But now that I have, I'd place it among the very best Hong Kong films I've seen. It's pure cinematic pleasure – an escapist, superhero-type action film that constantly dazzles and entertains.

The Iron Monkey is a Robin Hood-esque character who, face cloaked, steals from the rich and gives to the poor, marking him a wanted man by the evil ruling government. By day, however, the Monkey goes unrecognized in his day job as a respected doctor in the community.

Trouble arises with the arrival of vengeful Donnie Yen, whose son Wong Fei-Hung (the character Jet Li played all grown up in the *Once Upon a Time in China* films) ain't so bad at kung fu, either.

Put simply, this movie is awesome from start to finish. Even the comic-relief segments – usually the worst portions of HK films – glide along with delirious joy. But it's the action that puts this over the top, and Lord, is there ever action!

With Yuen Woo Ping (*Twin Warriors*) at the helm, there's plenty of gravity-defying wire work and feats of super-human strength. The climactic, three-man battle atop a series of poles while flames burn below is most impressive, but everything truly impresses in *Iron Monkey*.

It's very much like a comic book – the kind that Americans would love to make but haven't the first clue how.

Killers from Space
(1954)
Triton Multimedia
★☆☆☆☆

This infamous, bottom-of-the-barrel, low-rent sci-fi quickie stars Peter Graves and lots of stock footage. Ol' Pete is a pilot who sees strange green flashes while he's flying, forcing his controls to freeze and plane to crash. He's as good as dead until he mysteriously shows up on base with a nasty chest scar and no memory of the events.

It's not until he's properly hypnotized that he recalls having open-heart surgery performed on him by aliens with *huge* ping-pong-ball eyes and being menaced by rear-projection tarantulas and other creepy-crawlies. So the Americans simply blow them up. The end.

It took no imagination to make this film, and yet every one of its 80 minutes is an absolute chore to sit through. The green tint present whenever the aliens are on screen works less as a gimmick and more of an eyesore.

Are those ping-pong balls on your eyes or are you just the Killers from Space?

Shadow of the Vampire
(2000)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★☆☆

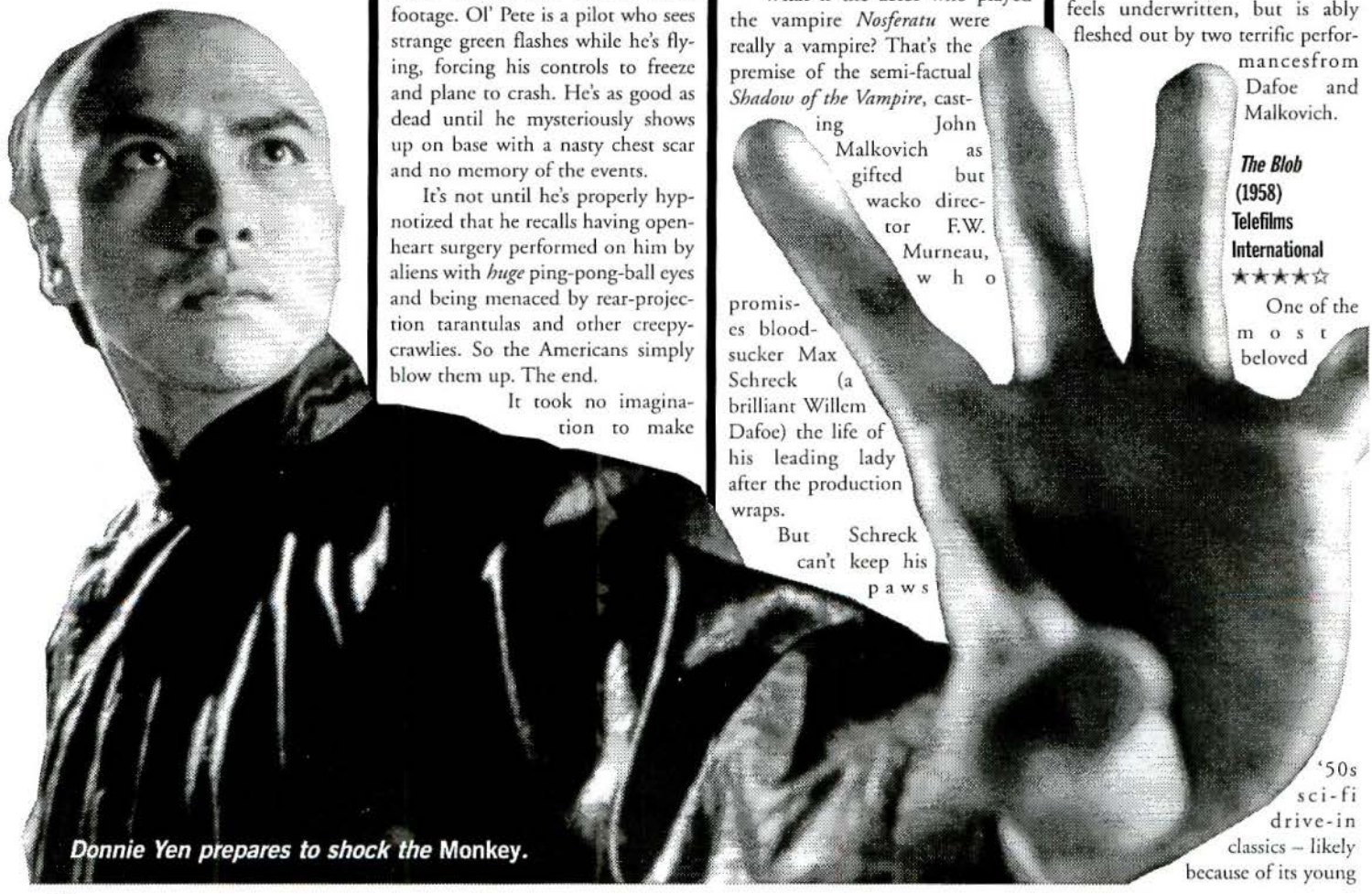
What if the actor who played the vampire *Nosferatu* were really a vampire? That's the premise of the semi-factual *Shadow of the Vampire*, casting John Malkovich as gifted but wacko director F.W. Murneau, who promises bloodsucker Max Schreck (a brilliant Willem Dafoe) the life of his leading lady after the production wraps.

But Schreck can't keep his paws or fangs off other crew members in the meantime, making havoc for the director, who's already being bothered by bloodsuckers of another kind – the film's financiers.

Part horror and part comedy, *Shadow* never quite finds a comfortable balance that allows it to succeed. (A scene where Dafoe eats a bat struck me as hilarious, and my wife as creepy.) As a result, it feels underwritten, but is ably fleshed out by two terrific performancesfrom Dafoe and Malkovich.

The Blob
(1958)
Telefilms International
★★★★☆

One of the most beloved '50s sci-fi drive-in classics – likely because of its young


Donnie Yen prepares to shock the Monkey.

star, Steve McQueen – *The Blob* isn't too imaginative or exciting, but it represents B-movies at their most pleasurable.

The story is simple: While making out with his virginal gal pal, Steve sees what he thinks is a shooting star. As we all know, it's a mass of space gelatin that grows bigger and bigger as it consumes humans whole. Neither the police nor the townspeople buy Steve's explanation as credible, so it's up to him and his semi-J.D. friends to rally together and conquer the seemingly unconquerable goo.

For what had to be a budget of six bucks, the special effects used for the actual Blob are pretty cool. So are the catchy Burt Bacharach theme – his first hit – and the ambiguous ending that left the door wide open for *Beware! The Blob*.

Kung Fu Cult Master
(1994)
Telefilms International
★★★★★
Deadly China Hero
(1993)
Telefilms International
★★★★★

Wong Jing's wacky *Kung-Fu Cult Master* finds young Mo-kei felled by the dreaded "Jinx's Palm" and orphaned after his parents commit suicide. Grown (and now played by Jet Li), Mo-kei wishes to get revenge on the men who drove his parents to their deaths, but the lingering effects of the Jinx's Palm prevent him from practicing kung fu.

But soon he's lucky enough to make the acquaintance of a master with a broken back, who rolls around on a giant boulder wrapped in vines. Mo-kei tricks the man into imbuing him with the Great Solar Stance kung-fu powers, rendering him nearly invincible.

Things get even wilder from there, with nutty wire stunts, horses swallowed whole by holes in the desert sand, a vampiric warrior who coughs up blood and lots of beheadings. In other words, this is not one to take seriously, and if you don't, you're in for some serious fun.

Also known as *Lord of the Wu Tang* (though the subtitles within always say "Wu Tong"), *Master* ends abruptly without tying up its loose ends, paving way for a sequel that never came. You won't mind.

Meanwhile, Jing's *Deadly China Hero* is just as wild, if such a thing is possible, bordering on self-referential parody. Jet Li again stars as Wong Fei-Hung, his signature role from the popular *Once Upon a Time in China* series, but this film is unrelated to those, and is a comedy. I mean, one of his assistants is buck-toothed and named Ah-So, for chrissake! (Imagine Harrison Ford playing Indiana Jones, but in a Zucker-Abrahams-Zucker spoof, and you'll get the idea.)

Master Wong battles hoards of "perverted monks," a temporary case of deafness and an evil guy with a cool flying-claw weapon in this silly but action-heavy flick, with fight choreography by Yuen Woo Ping (*The Matrix*). The climactic battle has Wong dressed like a chicken, fighting a giant centipede. For good measure, there's also a round of drunken boxing.

Both are must-sees. Just don't watch them back-to-back or your sense of reality will be shot to hell.

The Others
(2001)
Dimension Home Video
★★★★★

Among all Hollywood's stabs at ghost stories and haunted house movies of late – Jan de Bont's *The Haunting* biting hardest of all – none can hold a candle to the old-fashioned Gothic chills of the mega-creepy *The Others*.

Nicole Kidman – an actress I usually find appalling – impresses as a single mother living with her two photosensitive children in an old, dark house at the close of World War II. Soon after the arrival of a new house staff, her children begin to speak of ghostly "others" in the house. At first, Kidman writes it off to childhood imagination, but she soon learns that they are indeed not alone.

Unfolding at an assured pace, *The Others* drew me in completely with its suspenseful story and expert direction. What makes it creepy is not what you *see* so much as what you *hear*, which was a bold move that pays off. In fact, other than a late-in-the-game detour into *Night of the Living Dead* territory, *The Others* builds and builds to a series of shocks so well that it may be one of the best studio-made horror films of the past few decades. It's that good.

Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back
(2001)
Dimension Home Video
★★★☆☆

I may have seen all of Kevin Smith's films, but *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back* makes me think I'm being punished for not seeing them 100 times each.

Clearly, it's one "for the fans," as they say, but are there really that many hardcore Kevin Smith fans out there? At least enough to justify all the in-jokes and self-references?

The lovable-in-small-doses stoner duo of Jay (Jason Mewes) and Silent Bob (Smith) catch wind of a *Bluntman & Chronic* movie being made, based upon the comic book that was based upon them. Not getting a cut, they head to Hollywood to stop the movie from being made.

On the journey to L.A., they fellate a nun (Carrie Fisher) and meet up with a van full of hussies-cum-jewel-thieves, including the ever-plasticine Shannon Elizabeth and ever-hot Ali Larter. When they arrive – and when the movie really kicks in, thanks to all the digs at the studio – they infiltrate the Miramax lot, interrupting the shoots of *Scream 4* and *Good Will Hunting 2*, bumping into lots of stars poking fun at themselves (which temporarily gives you more respect for Ben Affleck).

Some of it is funny (Will Ferrell always is), but the parts that wink at the audience are not. (Yes, Kev, we remember *Clerks*. But let's not make it a punchline.) Smith is capable of material so much better than this, and hopefully he'll give us some more of that next, ditching the constant pot jokes and blowjob gags.

John Carpenter's Ghosts of Mars
(2001)
Columbia/Tristar Home Video
★☆☆☆☆

Ever since he became a brand-name director, John Carpenter has made his name part of his films' titles. But his latest is one I'm surprised *anyone* would want to lay claim to, even Alan Smithee.

In the future, a mining colony on Mars has gone mad. If you're looking for ghosts, don't bother, because the miners aren't ghosts at all. They're just heavy-metal types with pancake makeup and multiple piercings. Several of them look like Alice Cooper. A more apt title would be *John Carpenter's GWAR Groupies of Mars*, but that doesn't have quite the same sale-sizzle, does it?

Hottie cop Natasha Henstridge (*Species*) leads a team of police into the colony to retrieve a hardened criminal (Ice Cube), but as soon as they arrive, the "ghosts" start to make trouble, like killing them and stuff, using a variety of CGI sawblades that quickly de-limb and behead the officers. If you think it's

SAY IT AGAIN, HAM
'KUNG FU CULT MASTER'

- "You are willing to show us with your bitch!"
- "Why do you kill yourself?"
- "Don't think I am a hundred years' old granny, my dicky erects every morning."
- "If a woman practices 'Great Solar Stance,' one year later, she will have flat chest, with hairy hands and legs."
- "Don't push my head with your ass."
- "You will not happy ending!"
- "OK, terminate my Kung-fu now."
- "Let's call for hookers. Don't rape. You are the bastard, let's go."
- "My men's blood is stink."

only a matter of time before the law and the lawless band together to fight, then pat yourself on the back for having seen a movie before.

If you're looking for "who will survive?"-type suspense, don't bother. Since the movie is a flashback (which itself contains several flashbacks and even flashbacks within flashbacks), they tell you right up front that Natasha is the lone survivor of her force – not that you care about any of them.

Carpenter's done some lazy work lately – including the plodding *Vampires*, which this resembles – but *Ghosts* may be his most creatively bankrupt work ever. The dialogue is stupid, the action tired and the horror nonexistent. It limps along for what feels like three hours. On top of that, it doesn't even make Natasha get naked, and any Natasha movie minus nudity isn't looking to score points in the redeeming qualities department.

Rat Race
(2001)
Paramount Home Video
★★★★☆

In the tradition of madcap ensemble comedies like *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* and, um, *Scavenger Hunt* comes *Rat Race*. It boasts two Oscar winners among its leading cast. Unfortunately, those two Oscar winners are comedy vacuum Whoopi Goldberg and living *Chill Factor* Cuba Gooding Jr. Add aging British has-been John Cleese, the ferociously unfunny Kathy Najimy and you've got a movie that dares you to not hate it.

But to my immense surprise, it's pretty damned funny. Granted, Whoopi sure as hell ain't, but the movie itself as a whole is, thanks to able support from Jon Lovitz, Rowan Atkinson, Seth Green, Amy Smart, Breckin Meyer and a ton of throwaway bits – finely balanced between the smart and the slapstick – that hit with alarming accuracy. But I think most of the credit should go to director Jerry Zucker, who seems to have rid his system of trying drama (*Ghost*, *First Knight*) and gotten back to what he does best: comedy. The man was one-third responsible for *Airplane!* and *The Naked Gun*, lest we forget.

The aforementioned cast members are randomly selected Vegas tourists recruited for a Cleese-masterminded chase to a train station locker in New Mexico, where a $2 million booty awaits the person who gets there first. Hijinks ensue! (As do cows, Nazis and a busload of Lucille Ball fans.)

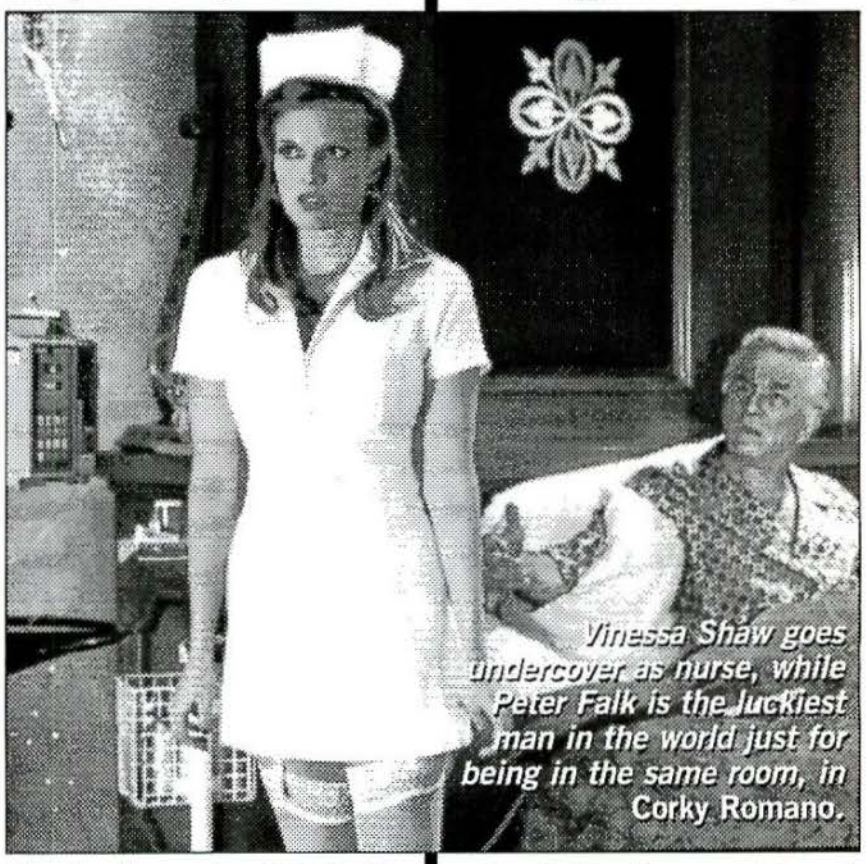
Zany all-star cross-country laffriots like this aren't made anymore, because they're often disasters waiting to happen (remember *Speed Zone*?). But this one is great – funny just for the sake of being funny. As much as I wanted – *expected* – to become ill at seeing it, I have to admit there are more laughs in it than the rest of this summer's comedies combined.

Hannibal
(2001)
MGM/UA Home Video
★★☆☆☆

When I first saw *Hannibal*, the decade-in-the-making follow-up to Oscar-blessed *The Silence of the Lambs*, I liked it, perhaps responding to several good scenes – scenes that must have been good enough for me to ignore the wretchedness that fills the rest of the bloated running time, because a second viewing has revealed *Hannibal* to be a startling mediocre missed opportunity.

Or, as my wife put it, "That sucked hard."

FBI Agent Clarice Starling (now played, to my delight, by Julianne Moore) is involved in a case that proves embarrassing to the Bureau, so she's put on a seemingly simple assignment to interview a rich dude who claims to have new information on Dr. Hannibal Lecter. The wealthy bedridden fellow turns out to be a former victim of Lecter's, and as a result, hasn't much of a face left. Gary Oldman plays this man, but quite honestly, he looks like Chucky from the *Child's Play* movies.



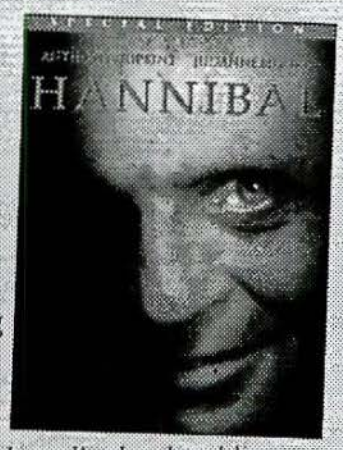
Vinessa Shaw goes undercover as nurse, while Peter Falk is the luckiest man in the world just for being in the same room, in Corky Romano.

Meanwhile, Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) is living the high life in Italy, but is soon reunited with Starling when he's kidnapped by goons under Oldman's employ, who prepare the doctor for a bizarre revenge scenario involving man-eating boars.

Even more bizarre is the hallucinatory ending in which Starling and fellow agent Krindler (Ray Liotta) have a drugged-out dinner together and talk like four-year-olds, and then Lecter opens up Krindler's head, scoops up and fries up some of his brains, and feeds it to him. Over the top? What's that?

Ridley Scott directs, and puts his personal stamp all over the mother, which is to say this is no Jonathan Demme film, and a shame there. But to be fair, even if you didn't compare it to the far-superior *Lambs*, *Hannibal* would still stink up the place. There's little logic to it and zero suspense.

BURNING QUESTIONS 'HANNIBAL'



1. Wouldn't by-the-book Clarice file a sexual harrassment report over the "cornpone country pussy" remark?
2. Did I hear correctly: Inspector *Potzie?!?*
3. Since when did the learned Lecter start saying things like "Okie dokie" and "Goody goody"?
4. How could one of the FBI's most wanted criminals walk about public places freely without being recognized?
5. Instead of cutting off his own hand, why didn't Hannibal just slam that huge knife down on the handcuff chain?
6. How could one of the FBI's most wanted criminals board a freakin' commercial airline with all the police out looking for him?
7. David Mamet, what the *fuck* were you thinking?

Corky Romano
(2001)
Touchstone Home Video
★★☆☆☆

Joe Dirt
(2001)
Columbia/Tristar Home Video
★★☆☆☆

Saturday Night Live's Chris Kattan's shtick consists of acting like a sexually ambiguous, mildly retarded monkey-child. In small doses, it can be pretty funny. Heck, in large doses, it might be funny, too, but the script for his first starring role is so weak that *Corky Romano* collapses under the staggering weight of its own unfunniness.

It sets up a series of comic set pieces that have you thinking, "Okay, this will be good," and yet each one falls flat with no payoff or imagination. I also don't think it was directed as much as someone just let the camera run.

Kattan plays Corky, the black sheep of a crime family that needs him to infiltrate the FBI to get rid of evidence against them. So they fake an ID and a transfer – Agent Pissant is his name, har-de-har – and Corky is suddenly pratfalling his way through the halls of the FBI, snorting confiscated cocaine and wearing silly disguises. Yeah, right.

Joe Dirt – with *SNL* refugee David Spade – is better. But that's no compliment. Spade's white-trash janitor with a mullet is in search of his parents, who ditched him at the Grand Canyon when he was eight. That's pretty much the story, which Dirt relates to a condescending DJ (Dennis Miller), thus turning him into some folk hero. Did I miss something?

Along the way, Joe meets a dog whose testicles are frozen to the porch, Joe mistakes a chunk of airline waste for a meteorite and Joe gets covered in poo.

A challenge to producer Robert Simonds (*Deuce Bigalow, Billy Madison*): No more movies where the title shares the stupid name of the lead character.

Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man
(1942)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★★☆

House of Frankenstein
(1944)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★★☆

Despite the order of the title, *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* is much more wolf than monster. In fact, it can be viewed as a direct sequel to *The Wolf Man*, with Lon Chaney Jr. effectively reprising his role as the lycanthropic Larry Talbot, who turns into a murderous wolf at every full moon.

Four years after the original film took place, Talbot is still spurting facial hair (in excellent makeup transition shots) at all hours of the night, and for him, it's a bitch. He's the textbook definition of suicidal, but has discovered his curse won't allow him to die.

Taking pity on him, an old gypsy woman takes him to the ruins of Dr. Frankenstein's castle, where Talbot discovers Frankenstein's monster (Bela Lugosi) encased in an underground ice cave. He frees him so the requisite slow-moving-monster- frightens-villagers scene can take place, and Talbot seeks answers in the doc's diaries, but you likely already know the outcome, thanks to all the sequels that followed. The final-reel battle between the two creatures isn't the all-out war one would hope for, concluding in another ambigious and waterlogged ending, but the movie itself is quite comfortable, delivering lots of that Universal Gothic spirit that warms the blood.

Frankenstein, on his way to Meet the Wolfman.

There's even less Frankenstein in the follow-up, *House of Frankenstein*, in which the monster (now Glenn Strange) and Wolf Man (still Chaney) are thawed out by maniacal mad scientist Boris Karloff and his hunchback assistant, who hope to learn some of the departed doctor's secrets. They also remove a stake from the skeleton of Dracula, thus reviving the count, played here by John Carradine, who looks far too white trash for the part. Even more, there's a love triangle a-brewin' between Talbot, the hunchback and a puffy-faced gypsy girl, which is sick no matter how you slice it.

Even with an upped adventure factor over *Meets*, *House* starts to show some signs of repetition ("Last night I was tortured by the damned!" exclaims Talbot, still whining on and on about his condition), but it doesn't detract from the fun.

Abbott & Costello Meet the Mummy
(1955)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★★☆

Almost on par with the duo's *Meet Frankenstein*, *Abbott & Costello Meet the Mummy* plops the two smack dab into being framed for murder over a valuable ancient medallion. This leads to the good guys and the bad guys all hightailing it to an Egyptian tomb, where Lou is menaced by bats, a giant lizard and, of course, a 4,000-year-old mummy.

The comic highpoint occurs near the end, where they are three different walking bandaged men, only one of which is the real mummy. There's also a good running gag about Lou charming cobras.

13 Ghosts
(1960)
Columbia Tristar Home Video
★★★★★

Probably the greatest gimmick flick of all-time, William Castle's *13 Ghosts* even manages to be an effective, good-natured ghost story with a couple of genuine shocks that still shock several decades later.

An all-American family on the verge of bankruptcy think they've hit it big when they inherit a furnished home from a late uncle, one Dr. Zorba, known for his experiments with black magic and extensive ghost collection. On their first night in the new digs, a Ouija board

tells them a baker's dozen of spooks haunts the freakin' place and they're out for blood – and just to prove it, they immediately try to off the kids.

The gimmick comes with Castle's "Illusion-O" process – thankfully replicated on the DVD – where all the sequences with ghosts are tinted blue. To see them, you look through one end of the provided "ghost viewer"; if you're a coward, you look through the other end and don't see them at all. It was a stroke of marketing genius at its time; today, it's just damn near the greatest feature on a DVD yet.

Though "Illusion-O" certainly heightens the fun, it's not required to enjoy this immensely entertaining and occasionally sick-minded movie.

Jeepers Creepers
(2001)
MGM/UA Home Video
★☆☆☆☆

Jeepers Creepers: Movies don't suck much deepers.

In a thoroughly boring, repetitive and uninspired "horror" tale, a college-aged brother and sister are driving the back roads home for spring break when they see what looks like a guy dumping dead bodies down a pipe. Since this guy is the same who menaced and nearly killed them on the highway mere minutes before, most certainly they would *not* do what they proceed to

do next, and that is *go back and check it out.*

Dumb Boy – whose mouth is often agape, revealing a formidable pool of saliva under his tongue – falls down the pipe and discovers a horde of dead bodies. He and Dumb Sis – whose refusal to disrobe results in *zero* mitigating factors for the film – try to warn the townspeople, who don't want to believe them. Until they see the winged beast.

This movie might have been scary if the bad guy were really a bad guy, and not a gargoyle-type creatures who sews and listens to old records (or, as my brother put it, "a reptilian Betsy Ross"). I think I heard the line "Let's get out of here" about five times, but to be honest, my mind was so numb from tedium that I lost my ability to count.

This was written and directed by *Powder*'s Victor Salva. I think the only scary stuff he's been involved in was some behind-the-scenes footage during *Clownhouse* where he taped himself getting orally serviced by a 12-year-old boy who acted in the movie.

The Goonies
(1985)
Warner Home Video
★★☆☆☆

The Goonies may have been good enough for Cyndi Lauper, but it's not good enough for me. Let's face it: It's a lot more fun to say than it is to see. *Goonies, Goonies, Goonies.* Am I right?

In tirelessly whimsical Spielbergian fashion, a group of crazy kids try to save their town from being demolished by going in search of reputed buried treasure of the pirate One-Eyed Willy (*snicker*). There's the fat kid, the smart kid, the annoying kid and the kid who should be on Ritalin, and together they find a map, then a cave, then a mongoloid in a Superman shirt, then the treasure. The end. All told, the story should occupy only 30 minutes, but director Dick Donner and scripter Chris Columbus took it upon themselves to extend that to a painful 122.

If you watch the DVD, you can see the fabled octopus attack deleted scene, excised for good reason. You can also see the Goonies as they are today – all grown up (well, except for that infantile Corey Feldman guy, who is so annoying and loudmouthed, the commentary is difficult to sit through).

The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires
(1974)
Anchor Bay Entertainment
★★★★☆

Not since chocolate and peanut butter joined forces to make Reese's Peanut Butter Cups have two great tastes gone so great together! In this case, we're talking about Shaw Brothers kung fu and Hammer horror coming together for the one-of-a-kind *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires*, or *The Seven Brothers Meet Dracula*, or *The Seven Brothers and Their Sister Meet Dracula.* (It all depends on whom you ask.)

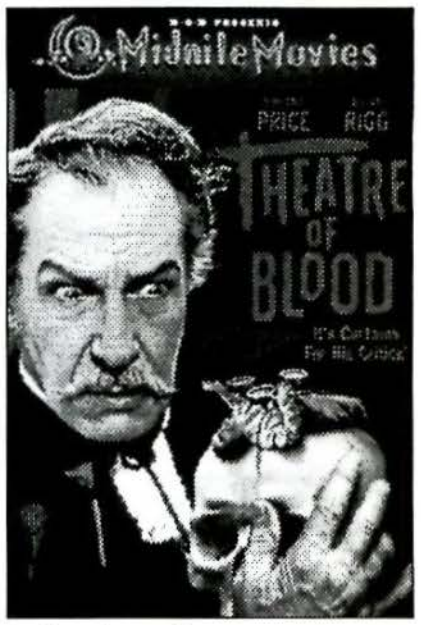
It begins in 19th-century Transylvania, with the high priest of the seven golden vampires making a trek to Dracula's castle to ask him to resurrect his vamps. Dracula decides to inhabit the poor lunk's body instead and become their master. Flash-forward a full century and Prof. Van Helsing (Peter Cushing) and his foppish son enlist seven brothers and their sister – all highly skilled in the martial arts – to find the vampires' village and wipe them off the earth for good. Their expedition is funded by Scandinavian hottie Julie Ege.

After a long start, the two groups meet and fight in two separate battles. Seeing the vampires disintegrate into dust is pretty cool. Seeing the vampires rip the shirts of terrified women is pretty funny, because y'know, they're hundreds of years old and are still into that sort of thing.

The later Hammer pictures were often in need of some juice, and Shaw-style kung fu gives this one just the right kick.

Theatre of Blood
(1973)
MGM/UA Home Video
★★☆☆☆

Taking vengeance for years of



bad reviews, hammy stage actor Vincent Price offs a cadre of stuffy British theater critics one by one, using methods culled from Shakespearean plays. Basically, it's *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* with a letters degree, but without the good-natured humor.

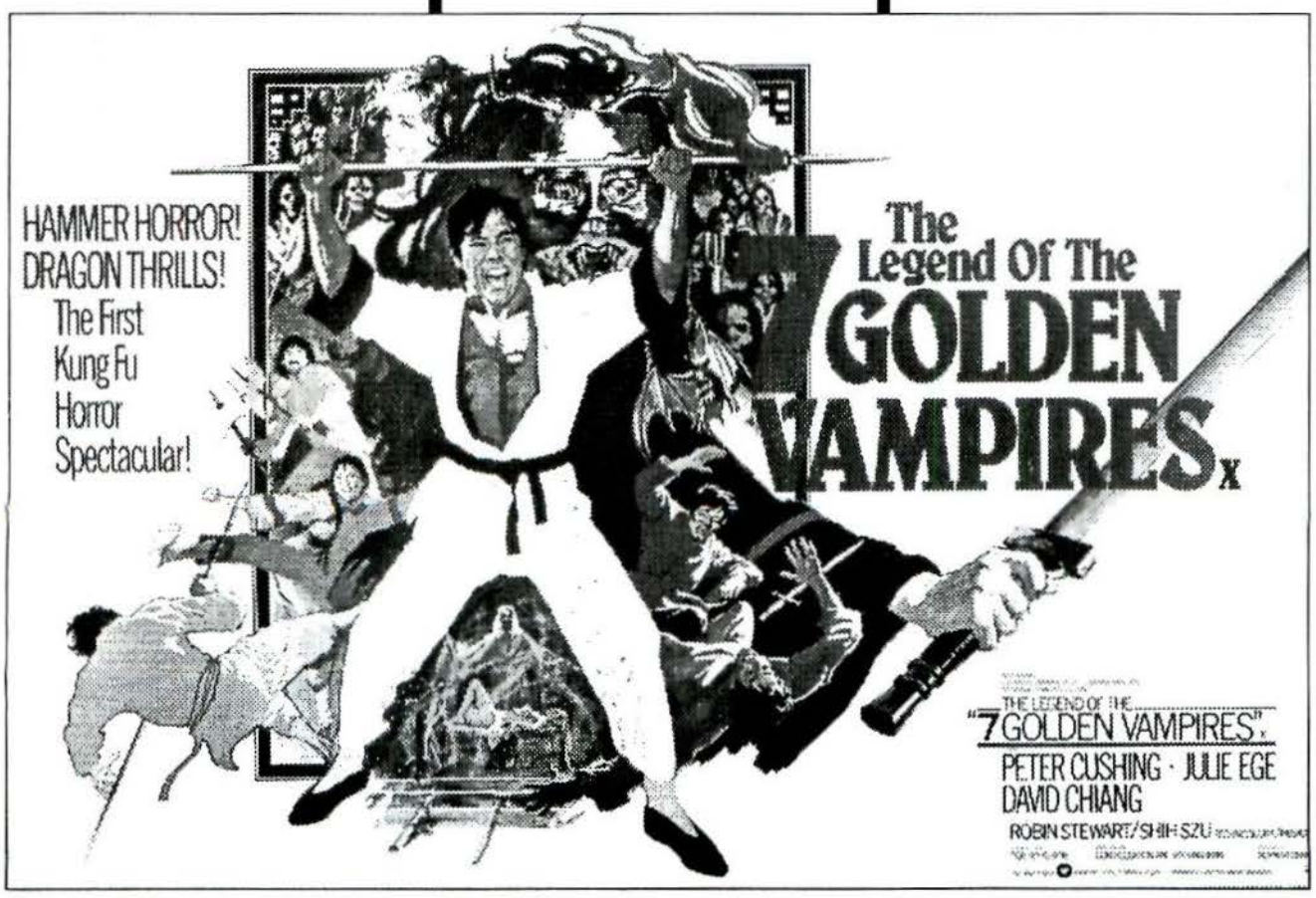
Granted, this is one sick movie, but it's awfully dry and not too enjoyable. Little pleasure comes from the murder sequences, though they're certainly varied – a beheading here, a multiple stabbing there. The nastiest bit comes when Price purees Robert Morse's twin poodles into a chunky pudding and force-feeds it down his throat until he dies of suffocation. Or bad taste.

Diana Rigg plays Price's daughter who aides and abets, but it seems like to a crime to have someone like her in drag for much of the running time. This film has a much better rep than it deserves.

Office Space
(1999)
20th Century Fox Home Entertainment
★★★★☆

Mike Judge's *Office Space* is a great little comedy that failed to find a box-office audience. It's not hard to see why – a lot of what it satirizes is all too true. The cubicle world of faceless corporations is depressing to all those who work there and *don't* have corner offices, which is probably why so few people were willing to pay to see it onscreen. But if, like me, you've since dug yourself out of that hellhole, you can appreciate it a lot more without wanting to slit your own throat.

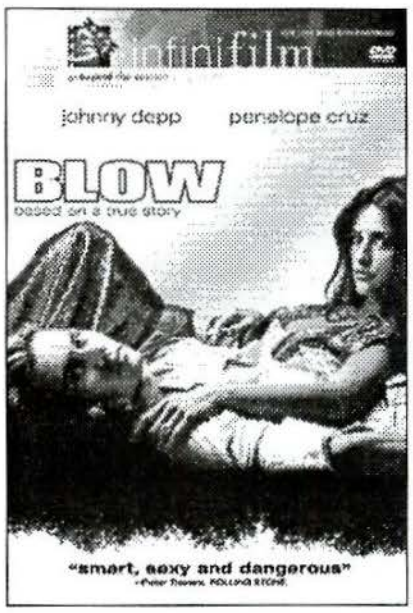
Swingers' amiable Ron Livingston stars as a young man so sick of sitting in front of a computer monitor all day adhering to



ridiculous rules set forth by eight different bosses, he decides not to show up anymore. He doesn't quit; he just doesn't show up. Through reasons not too far-fetched, this results in a promotion while his hard-working friends get pink-slipped.

Unamused, he and his pals plant a virus and hatch a scheme borne from *Superman III* to get some sizable payback. The ending is too pat, but the jokes work. The supporting cast is unusually strong, particularly *NewsRadio*'s Stephen Root, unrecognizable as office punching-bag Milton, and smarmy Gary Cole as the suspenders-wearing executive who seems to have a coffee mug attached to his hand at all times.

Office Space is the one movie Jennifer Aniston has not been able to ruin, and is certainly funnier than any given moment from Judge's bread and butter, the fiercely overrated *Beavis & Butt-head.*



Blow
(2001)
New Line Home Video
★★☆☆☆

Blow blows. It's like *GoodFellas*, *Boogie Nights* and *Traffic*, minus those films' soul, fire and brilliance.

Its lone asset is Johnny Depp, who stars as George Jung, the man responsible for most of the cocaine snorted in this great nation throughout the 1980s. Depp is far better than the material, which follows the standard Point A-to-Point B storytelling approach of Hip Studio Biopics. (Then again, should that be a surprise? After all, it *is* written by erotic thriller actor Nick Cassavettes.) The soundtrack would be kind of cool if you didn't keep thinking, "Hey, didn't Tarantino use that already?"

Peppering the story along the way are a criminally underused Franka Potente (*Run Lola Run*), a grotesquely overweight Ethan Suplee (*Mallrats*) and that horrible shrew Penelope Cruz. Even the unusual casting of Paul "Pee-wee Herman" Reubens and Bobcat Goldthwait fails to kickstart the damn thing.

The entire third act becomes a melodramatic father-daughter tale that feels lifted from a TV-movie. It ends with Depp in the worst fatsuit and makeup job I've seen Hollywood do in a number of years. Attention director Ted Demme: *Who's Still the Man?* is calling!

Faust: Love of the Damned
(2000)
Trimark Home Entertainment
★☆☆☆☆

First and foremost, *Faust* is a farce of a film. This purported horror story, based on a comic book I'm told sucks, is a nonsensical mess filled with blood, death metal music and *lots* of licking.

A painter named Johnny Jaspers (no-name Mark Frost) sells his soul to the devil (*Wishmaster*'s Andrew Divoff) and is given powers that turn him into a horned creature with a Spawn-like cape and Wolverine-type metal claws. It's supposed to look evil and menacing, but I thought he looked like The Noid in those old Domino's Pizza ads. His accent wavers somewhere between redneck, European and retard, and he looks like Jay Mohr possessed by *Taxi*'s Reverend Jim. Good Lord, is this actor *bad.*

Faust falls for his music therapist, who has problems of her own, flashbacking to her childhood, when she was apparently raped by something out of *Hellraiser.* Faust also fucks the devil's right-hand woman, who goes by the entirely frightening name of Claire. She gets turned into a freak of nature herself when the devil makes her tits and ass grow to gigantic proportions and some sort of Vaseline-type substance drips from her legs. Hey, don't go looking for character development.

I don't know what the hell was going on or why, but Jeffrey Combs is in there, too, long enough to overact, sport Luke Perry sideburns and swallow a snake. There's also a midget – though sadly underused – and a lot of heads and arms that get chopped off. Strangely, with all these bizarre elements, *Faust* is still a total bore.

Brian Yuzna, director of *Bride of Re-Animator* and *The Dentist*, is to blame.

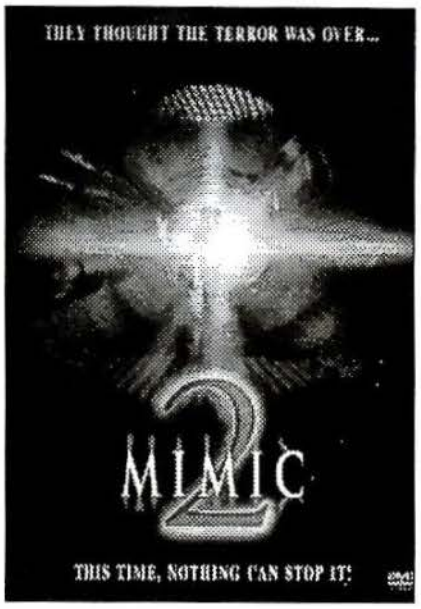
Satan's Sadists
(1969)
Troma Team Video
★★★★☆

Al Adamson's *Satan's Sadists* has what Roger Corman's many biker movies did not: a big set of balls. Frequently hiding behind a cap and mod sunglasses, Russ Tamblyn plays Anchor, the leader of a skuzzy biker gang that roams the roads, raping and pillaging along the way. His none-too-bright charges include the always-tripping Acid, a Mohawked Indian named Firewater and his whore whose name we didn't catch, but she's played by Adamson's wife Regina Carrol and has hair that is unbelievable.

The Sadists may have finally met their match when they cross a Vietnam vet at a near-deserted gas station/café, where the world's dumbest waitress works, played perhaps by the world's dumbest actress. After the gang murders a few innocent bystanders, "Hero" and "Waitress" (as Anchor and friends refer to them) give chase.

Don't miss the exciting murder-by-snake scene! Or the orgy that results after dropping LSD in a camping group's coffee pot! Or when one of the Sadists says of a female sunbather, "This one was keepin' her milk warm."

Fast and fairly furious, *Satan's Sadists* shows its budgetary restrictions, but plays like a million bucks.



Mimic 2
(2001)
Dimension Home Video
★★★★☆

A straight-to-video sequel to Guillermo del Toro's underperforming but well-liked giant-cockroach thriller from 1997, the belated *Mimic 2* revists the mutant bug strain created in the first film, but with only one of its characters – and a minor one at that (so minor I don't remember her from the first one at all).

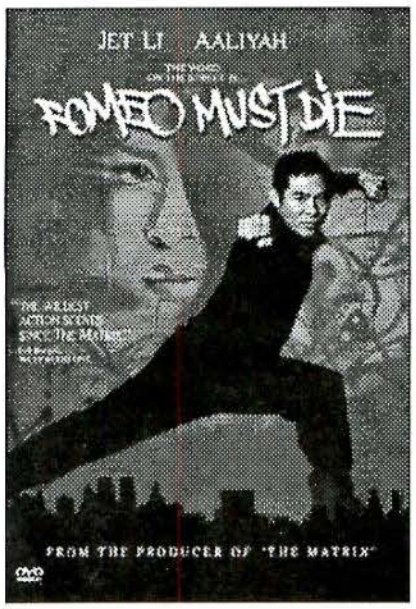
The star is not Mira Sorvino, but Alix Koromzay (a ringer for Amanda Plummer), a socially inept schoolteacher who feels more at home talking to her insect collection than humans. Various loser men in her life start turning up dead, so toothpick-chewing cop Bruno Campos comes to investigate.

Before you know it, she's being pursued by the big bug that wants to mate. For much of the film, it has her trapped in the school with a couple of students, having turned the grounds into a nest. By the end, it comes to visit her apartment.

Scientifically senseless but lean and mean at 82 minutes, *Mimic 2* delivers some good bug-kills-man action even on a tight budget, and also offers *lots* of insect goo, which looks suspiciously like either vanilla pudding or semen.

Romeo Must Die
(2000)
Warner Home Video
★★★☆☆

Very loosely based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Jet Li's first American starring vehicle suffers from being *too* American. Although it's made in the solid,



urban B-actioner mode that Warner practically invented, it restrains its main asset – its star – as if they were afraid to let the movie be too cool.

Li plays Han (not Romeo), a Chinese ex-cop who escapes from prison to America (okay, Vancouver) when he learns of the death of his brother, presumably at the hands of his family's enemy, an African-American family headed by Delroy Lindo. His daughter (the late Aaliyah) is an independent soul that wants nothing to do of his criminal ways. Though their families are at war, she and Han naturally grow to like one another.

But that's it. The movie doesn't let them do anymore than simply *like* one another and hang, in a manner as non-threatening as, say, one would "hang" with "Mr. Cooper." After all he goes through, he's not even rewarded with a kiss. All he gets is a gentle hug and a little bit of freak action on the dancefloor, in a gratuitous music sequence.

Taking a cue from Sonny Chiba's *The Streetfighter*, three of the fight scenes (which seem downright slow in comparison to those in Li's HK work) utilize X-ray shots to enhance the bone-snappin' action. Li and the others also exhibit a little gravity-defying, running-up-the-wall power, presumably influenced by *The Matrix*. The warehouse battle toward the end outright steals at least three moves from Li's own *Black Mask*.

Planet of the Vampires
(1965)
MGM/UA Video
★★☆☆☆

A spaceship answering a distress call of another lands (following one of cinema's *longest* crash-landing sequences) on a planet. Of vampires! As soon as they land on this planet of vampires, it's smackdown time on the ship, because various crew members are temporarily possessed and start attacking one another for no reason. Maybe it has something to do with the fact they've landed on the planet of the vampires? Just a guess.

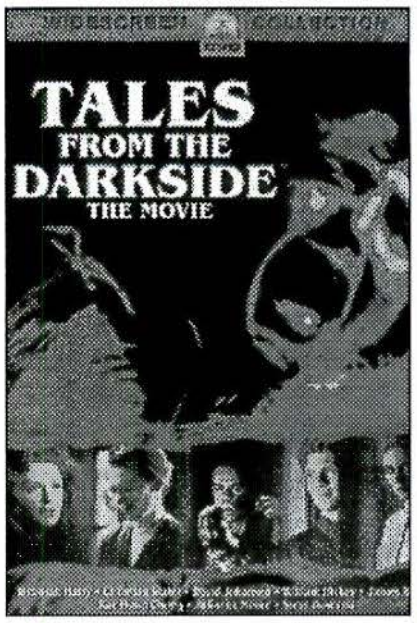
Soon, a few of the astronauts are killed by a virtually unseen force (although it does take the shape of a laser light show at one point), only to be resurrected as zombies with burnt faces to try and get the others. At least I think that's what happened. So little happens in this movie, it's hard to tell, and since everyone wears the same costume, it's difficult to tell the ones without breasts apart.

So actually, there are no vampires, but zombies. The whole thing's a hoax! One can give director Mario Bava credit for his rich color scheme and atmospheric sets; the film looks fabulous even when the story lags, which is the entire time.

Tales from the Darkside: The Movie
(1990)
Paramount Home Video
★★★★☆

With George Romero and Stephen King involved, this horror anthology might as well be *Creepshow 3*, even though it's not. It was spawned from the rather lame syndicated TV series of the same name, and better than any single episode I ever saw.

To tie its three tales together, Debbie Harry plays a well-to-do housewife preparing to cook little Matthew Laurence for dinner. In



order to prolong his life, the bowl-cut kid tells her scary stories. The first – and the best – is the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle-derived "Lot 249," a mummy-on-the-campus romp with Christian Slater battling a member of the living dead with an electric kitchen knife. This segment benefits from the presence of two great actors in early roles – Steve Buscemi and Julianne Moore.

Next is a King story, "Cat from Hell," in which rich old coot William Hickey hires hitman David Johannsen to off a particularly nasty pussy in his house. Of course, the job turns out to be more difficult than ol' Buster Poindexter imagined, ending with a ludicrous but most welcome sick twist.

Finally, there's "Lover's Vow," about a struggling artist whose life is spared by a murderous gargoyle if he swears to secrecy. It's a one-trick pony, but admittedly, its trick is fun to watch.

The 36 Crazy Fists
(1977)
Brentwood Home Video
★★★★☆

After getting beat up by some local toughies, Wong decides it's high time he learn some kung fu. So he signs up at his local Shaolin temple, only to be forever ridiculed by his master. While washing his tight white undershirts at the river one day, he meets a drunken old man who teaches him the ways of the 36 crazy fists! There are 36 of them! And they are all so crazy!

And he gets better and better, and gets himself into a heap o' trouble, but prevails of course, because he has strong kung fu!

Basic? Yep. Silly? Of course. A good time? Better believe it. Does it end with a freeze-frame of our victorious hero jumping in the air? Yessiree.

The fights were coordinated by Jackie Chan, who is supposed to have a non-speaking bit part, but damned if I could spot him

Y2K: Shut Down Detected
(1999)
1:1 Films
★★★★☆

Though it may seem dated with all the Y2K hysteria now behind us, the short film *Y2K: Shut Down Detected* is one of the better do-it-yourself films I've seen. It's slick and professional in everything but the acting, thankfully avoiding most of the pretentious trappings that kill a majority of low-budget homemade films.

Beginning mere minutes before 1999 turns to 2000, a biotech lab celebrating New Year's soon becomes a nightmarish prison when the Y2K bug causes the computer system to create a *Blob*-like (or *Creepshow 2* garbage-bag-like) creature that needs to find a host to propagate its evil ways. It soon does, and that poor employee becomes a pustule-encrusted zombie with a taste for blood.

The special effects – and in particular, the computer graphics – are pretty darn impressive, and even though the ending is a bit of a cop-out (or at least a head-scratcher), the 20 minutes spent watching *Y2K* are enjoyable. Kudos to the three directors (*three?*) for wisely not trying to extend this to feature-length … although, as revealed on the making-of featurette also on the tape, that was their original intention.

Find out more at *www.y2kshutdowndetected.com.*

City on Fire
(1993)
Dimension Home Video
★★☆☆☆

Ringo Lam's crime thriller is known more for being ripped off by Quentin Tarantino for *Reservoir Dogs* than it is on its own. And on its own, it's only passable.

It starts out terrific, with an exciting jewel heist that soon turns to a bullet-ridden shootout on the streets. It ends terrific, too, with another exciting heist, this one going even more poorly than the first. But in between is a dragged-

out relationship story between undercover cop Chow Yun Fat and his whorish girlfriend, as well as *a lot* of talking.

After seeing him in so many serious roles over the past several years, it's a bit awkward to seeing Chow act so goofy. But he's cool, so we'll cut him some slack. If only Lam had gone with more action than drama, *City on Fire* would truly be on fire.

Werewolf of London
(1935)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★☆☆

She-Wolf of London
(1946)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★★☆

Though it's the most famous, Lon Chaney's *The Wolf Man* wasn't the first werewolf movie Universal tried. That honor goes to the inferior *Werewolf of London*, in which a pretentious botanist (Henry Hull) is bitten by a werewolf while on a Tibetian expedition, thus complicating life back home with his fiancée in London Town.

An antidote exists with a rare flower he found in Tibet, but someone – another werewolf, perhaps? – has stolen its blooms, leaving botani-wolf to add "kill someone" to his nightly to-do list. The werewolf makeup and transformations are pretty good, given the limitations of the budget, but nothing is as gruesome as the scene where a plant eats a frog.

The main reason this *Werewolf* isn't as involving as *The Wolf Man* is because our "hero" is such an unlikable heel, you don't care what happens to him. In fact, you're just counting the minutes until he takes a silver bullet.

As a horror film, the later *She-Wolf of London* sucks, but as a mystery, it's great, if more than a bit predictable in these times. Years before *Lost in Space*, June Lockhart stars as a naïve young woman a week away from marriage who believes she's to blame for the rash of reported "she-wolf" sightings and killings at a nearby park. Although she can't remember leaving her bedroom at night, all evidence points squarely to her, so she convinces herself she's fallen victim to a supposed family curse.

Even if you'll have the ending guessed long before it comes (but not *too* long, as this is a hair over an hour total), it's still a satisfying payoff. Just don't expect much werewolf action – or *any*, for that matter, because you'll see exactly *none*, for reasons that will become clear upon viewing. Still a great title, though.

The Creeps
(1997)
Full Moon Entertainment
★★★★☆

Leave it to Full Moon to produce the world's first and only motion picture that features four of horror's most famous characters as midgets!

An annoying, stammering fat guy has created a machine that can extract and create living beings from first-edition volumes he's stolen from the library. (Hey, don't even question the science.) But his plan is slightly foiled when the librarian reclaims the texts during the experiment, and out of the tubes comes Dracula, Frankenstein, the Wolfman and the Mummy – except they're only a couple feet tall!

To bring the lil' creatures to full fruition, they need to get the books back and sacrifice the librarian (Rhonda Griffin), who is a hot little number (but a dim-bulb actress) that runs around blouseless for a few wonderful minutes, but fails to provide the much-hoped-for nudity. That comes from her dyke boss, who also is kidnapped by the monsters and tied to a table while they paw her scrawny body. This comes shortly after the film's highlight, where Boss Woman makes love to a hardbound copy of *Jane Eyre*.

Director Charles Band said the film is not intended to make light of the little people, but that's bullshit. It's fucking comic gold to see midgets running around dressed like monsters. I know it, you know it, and dollar-signs-in-his-eyes Charlie knows it.

Megiddo: The Omega Code 2
(2001)
Providence Entertainment
★★★☆☆

I know what you're thinking: "Ah, *Megiddo!* Do Bronson Pinchot and Jonathan Lipnicki reprise their roles?" But you're confusing the short-lived TV series *Meego* with *Megiddo*, the sequel to the unnecessarily theatrically released and inexplicably profitable Biblical thriller *The Omega Code*. But hey, it can happen to anyone.

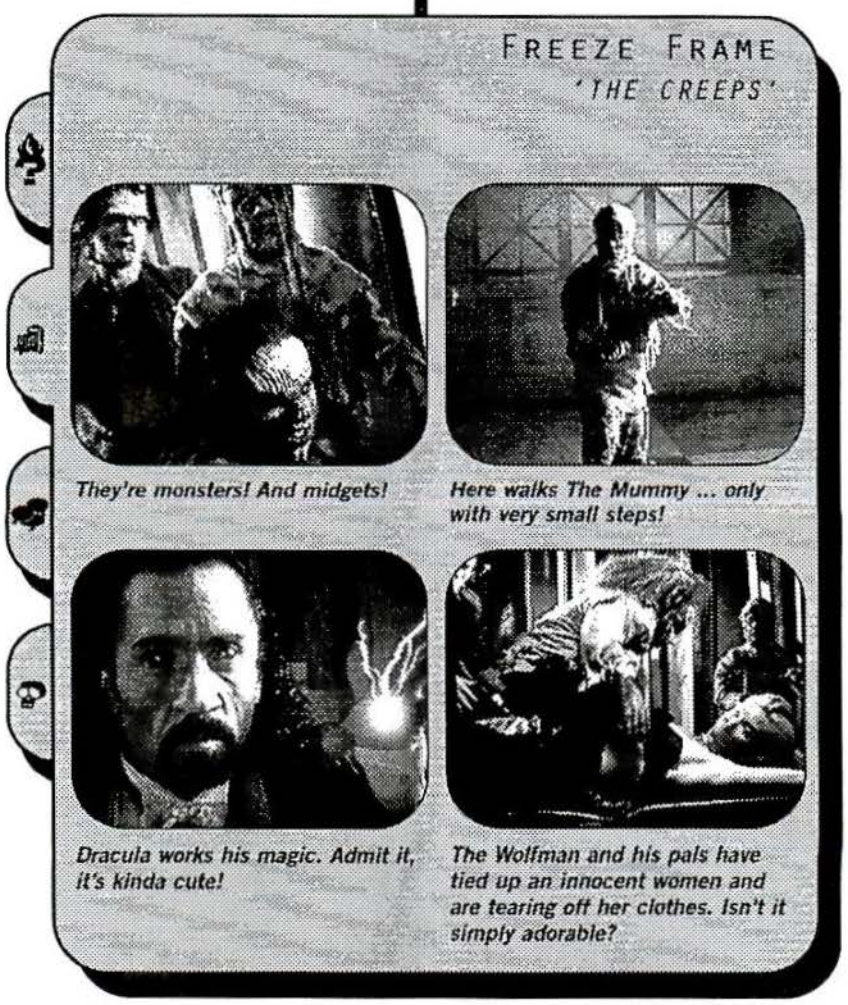
Megiddo – honestly a step up from the original *Omega Code*, and we're not just saying that because Casper Van Dien is nowhere to be found – opens with Satan (Michael York) looking for a new body to inhabit, which is curious since the world basically ended in *Omega*'s close. But a sequel was needed, so York finds a home in a young boy and immediately wills him to set his baby brother on fire.

The movie apes the first two *Omen* sequels as the boy is sent to military school, which he eventually overtakes, and then rises to prominent political power, becoming the leader of a unified world. York gives constant hammy monologue after hammy monologue, chewing the scenery so harshly he likely had to floss between takes. His pronunciation of "wrath" as "wroth" is a bit distracting, but not as distracting as the guy in the Spuds MacKenzie T-shirt in the "children of Africa" scene.

Because he wasn't doing anything else, *The Terminator*'s Michael Biehn is York's adversary, his brother and the vice president of the United States. As York takes over more and more of the world, Biehn gets juiced for the battle by talking to God. Because this is backed by the Crouch family of the TBN media empire (which renders the flick's criticism of media empires null and void), this is the only film where an action hero gets to quip, "The Lord giveth..." (cocks gun) "...and the Lord taketh away!"

The third act is an all-out war against Satan and his minions (including the talks-in-whispers Udo Kier) by Biehn and the oft-mentioned "the Chinese and the Latins." By this time, the puffy-faced Diane Venora has died, mercifully putting to an end the worst performance of her career, and York has vomited a string of insects, previously seen in *The Mummy*. Then Satan sheds his York skin to show his true self – the creature from *Jeepers Creepers* – and God's light shows up to decimate all who are evil. The end. I mean, I believe in God, too, but isn't that ending just a tad *too* convenient?

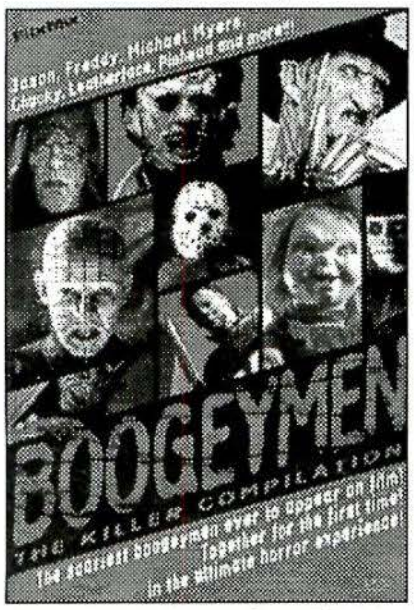
Megabucks were spent on *Megiddo*'s special effects, including the toppling of the Coliseum and the Sphinx, as well as extended war sequences, and look pretty good for a movie that should have premiered on TBN and stayed there. Curiously, this pro-Christian message is directed by Brian Trenchard-


FREEZE FRAME
'THE CREEPS'
They're monsters! And midgets!
Here walks The Mummy ... only with very small steps!
Dracula works his magic. Admit it, it's kinda cute!
The Wolfman and his pals have tied up an innocent women and are tearing off her clothes. Isn't it simply adorable?

Smith, whose CV includes such obvious, non-Crouch favorites like a couple of *Leprechaun* sequels and *Dead-In Drive-In*.

Boogeymen
(2001)
FlixMix
★★★★★

Kind of like *Terror in the Aisles* for extremely short-attention spans, *Boogeymen* is the first in a promised line of "nothing but the good stuff"



themed compilations from FlixMix. This one compiles 17 killer scenes from great (and not-so-great) horror movies from the '60s to the '90s for the gore hound in you.

Boogeymen rounds up not only the expected giants (i.e. *Halloween* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*), but also the *Scream*-era films and straight-to-video junk like *The Dentist*. Some may question the inclusion of *The Guardian* and *The Ugly*, but at least with them here, I can say I haven't seen it all before.

Highlights in an hour of nothing but highlights include the midget *Leprechaun* pogo-sticking a guy to death, that flying silver ball from *Phantasm* draining a guy's head and the famous appearance of Mrs. Bates in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* – the only black-and-white clip of the bunch. It's nice to revisit scenes from old favorites, as well as see the best pieces of films you might not necessarily want to own.

The DVD version makes this twice the fun, with 15 trailers, a "Name That Frame" game and biographies of the screen killers. Robert "Freddy" Englund provides audio commentary, but I advise to watch it with the *Pop-Up Video*-esque "Flix Facts" option on. Where else are you gonna learn the original titles for *Hellraiser* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* were *Sadomasochists from Beyond the Grave* and *Headcheese*?

Next up from Flixmix is *Ultimate Fights*, which has the potential to be every bit as cool.

The Best of Backyard Wrestling: Future Kings of the Ring! Vol. 1
(2000)
Backyard Wrestling Home Video
★★☆☆☆

This tape should be titled *Stupid Hick Dumbshits*. It's a collection of scenes of totally asinine losers performing their own WWF-style routines in their own backyards. Whereas the WWF is fake, methinks that fact is mostly lost on these mulletheads, who terrorize each other with folding chairs, brick walls and jumps from the roof onto card tables. Occasionally, some genius sets himself on fire. (Seriously, I doubt there's a GED in the bunch.) Some Tupperware-titted skank named Tylene Buck shows up in between segments to rip off her flimsy tank tops.

It's not funny like you think it would be, like *COPS: Too Hot for TV!* Instead, you feel terrible for the future of America. Or maybe I'm just getting old.

Mulholland Drive
(2001)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★★½

David Lynch's latest – following the success of his foray into the G-rated world of Disney with *The Straight Story* – is an extended version of a TV pilot that ABC gave the heave-ho and never aired. It's two-and-a-half hours long, and the first 80 percent of that ranks right up there among Lynch's finest work, namely *Blue Velvet* and the *Twin Peaks* pilot.

In an utterly multi-layered, non-linear and description-defying plot, a naïve wannabe actress named Betty (Naomi Watts) arrives in Los Angeles, where she meets the alluring Rita (Laura Harring), rendered an amnesiac after a near-fatal car accident. Weaving in and out of this mystery is a film director being hunted by Mafia types, a homeless man in an alley and a two-bit criminal whose heists turn into hilarious mishaps.

Up to the final half-hour, the story is fairly lucid (especially for Lynch) and totally compelling. Then something happens and the film takes a twist (to say the least) into the realm of the utterly bizarre, where every scene is a puzzle, and pieces of the fragmented story become circular, making you question everything you've seen up to this point.

It's not bad, mind you – thank God it's no wreck of a *Lost Highway* – but it is a little frustrating to have it be so ambiguous. Not that I have to have everything tidied up, but geez, even *Blue Velvet* had an *ending*.

Lynch's direction seems reinvigorated and tight, but the real stars of *Mulholland Drive* are its two female leads. They're real finds – both giving great performances (as well as the hottest sex scene I may have ever seen).

Sting of Death
(1966)
Something Weird Video
★★★★☆

Death Curse of Tartu
(1967)
Something Weird Video
★★★★☆

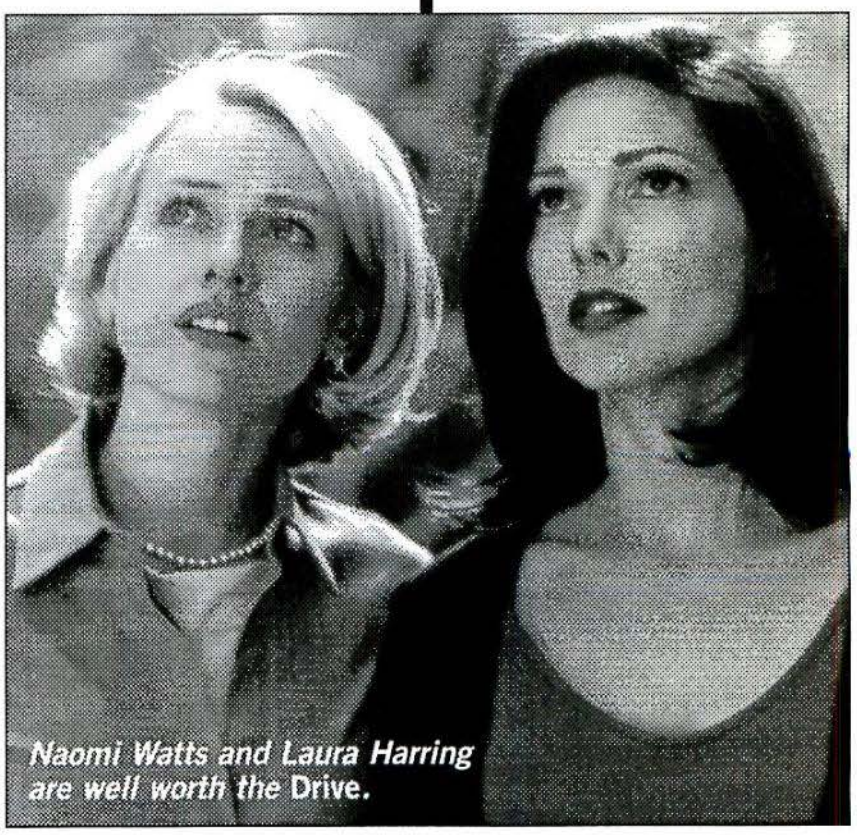
Get a double dose of evil in the Everglades with Floridian filmmaker William Grefé's *Sting of Death* and *Death Curse of Tartu*!

His lack of filmmaking flair shows immediately in the opening moments of *Sting of Death*, when a lovely young woman sunbathes near water that is dirty and green, until we go to an underwater shot that's clear and blue. She's attacked and killed by a giant jellyfish man (yes, a giant jellyfish man – or a guy in scuba gear and a plastic bag over his head) and her lifeless body is dragged by the hair over the credits as beautiful music that your grandmother would approve of plays. "Special singing guest star" Neil Sedaka was no doubt proud. Right away, you think, "This is the kind of movie that has two DPs, and they're both named Julio," and then the credit pops up to prove you correct.

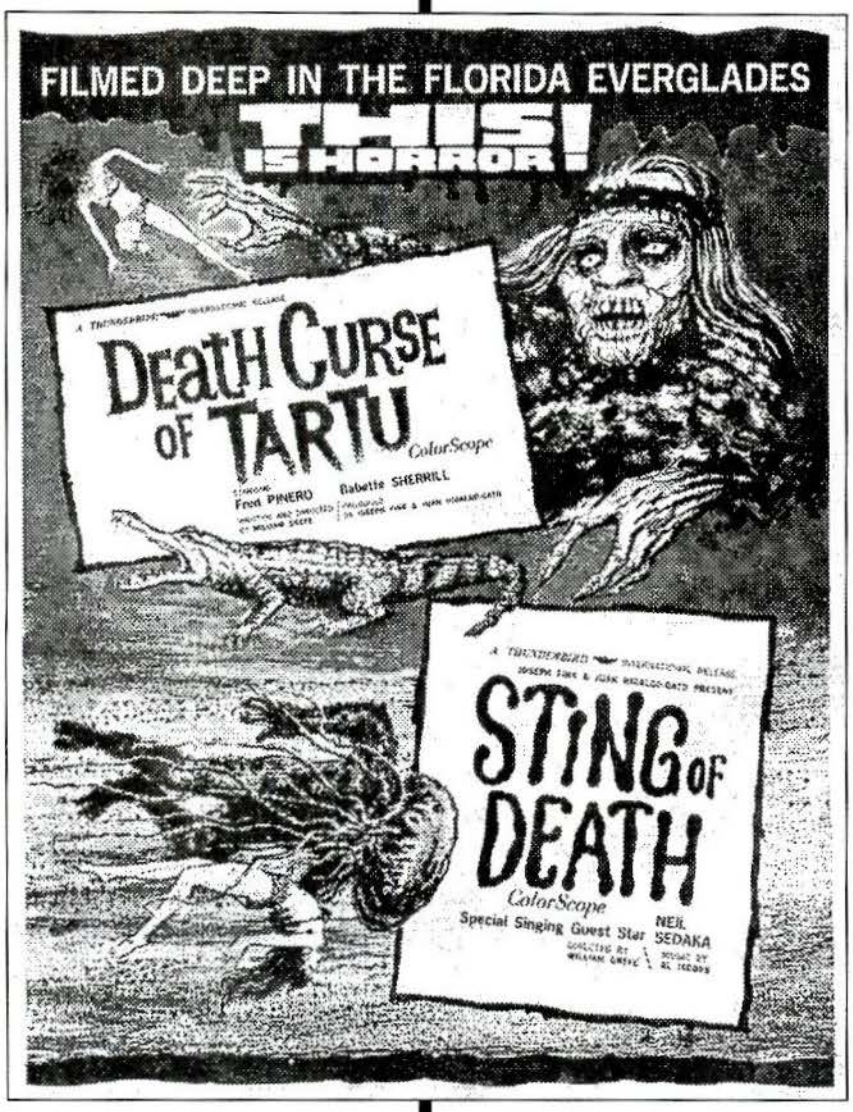
Some knucklehead marine biologists try to figure out what's up with all the unexplained fishermen deaths lately. They won't listen to the theory offered by their hunchback-like social-outcast assistant Egon – that it's the work of a giant jellyfish man, of course. (And if you don't have the rest of the film figured out by this point, there's little hope for you.)

The old-codger biologist has a hot little daughter named Karen, who's too busy having swim parties to think about deaths caused by a giant jellyfish man, until that giant jellyfish man attacks a couple of her partygoers. But at least he waits until after they have a couple of impromptu musical numbers (recycling the same butt shots), dance a conga line and say silly things like, "Fly away, you cuckoo bird!" (See, the movie is just like *Beach Blanket Bingo* or *Catalina Caper*, but with an added bonus of stinging deaths.)

The partygoers rightly scatter


Naomi Watts and Laura Harring are well worth the Drive.

into their boat and take off, but the giant jellyfish man has fucked with their rig and it sinks, leaving them all to be attacked by jellyfish. (Well, okay, they're not *attacked* by jellyfish in the way that Queen Latifah had the shit stung outta her in *Sphere*; instead, there's some obviously fake jellyfish in the water that



don't move and the actors have to flail about until they make contact with the creatures.) The bar for corny action is thus raised – and then matched! – when the hunky-but femme-biologist battles the giant jellyfish man in his secret lair.

Oh, and before I forget: Sometime before that, there's a shower scene with semi-nudity, and it appears that the giant jellyfish man is wearing Mardi Gras beads in this sequence. Needless to say, it's not the kind of film that would ever win any awards, unless they gave out one for Most Distracting Forehead Mole on a Lead Character – Jesus God, Have You Had That Thing Looked At?!?

The *Death Curse of Tartu* hinders anyone who dares mess with that fated ancient Indian burial grounds for which Florida is so famous. In the case of this film, the Indian is 400 years old, has a skeleton-makeup face and comes with his own powwow theme song.

Ignoring the curse, an archaeology teacher takes his wife and four of his students to the grounds, where the kids rush off to make out, but only until "it's marshmallow time," which they celebrate by doing a herky-jerky dance. This is all after some other explorer got strangled by a huge snake, and soon enough, one of the boys falls victim to a shark. Yes, one of those famous Florida swamp sharks.

Another guy ends up being chased across the swamp by a snake – and then bitten to death – while one girl loses a hand to a crocodile before cashing in her entire life from the shock of it all.

But our hero knows how to defeat this Tartu. He enters Tartu's cave and shoots at him, but Tartu chases his wife around for a while before teach can toss Tartu into quicksand, making some kind of Tartu sauce. Sorry, I couldn't resist.

From Hell
(2001)
20th Century Fox Home Entertainment
★☆☆☆☆

Sleepy Hollow – great direction – a good script – narrative drive – a sense of humor + a cameo from The Elephant Man + several old Brits named Ian = *From Hell*. I was bored to tears.

Kill, Baby ... Kill!
(1966)
Something Weird Video
★☆☆☆☆

Italian director Mario Bava is considered a legend by many. Heck, I guess if you asked me, I'd probably say he's a legend, too. But I don't think I've ever actually sat through one of his films, and *Kill, Baby ... Kill!* is no exception. Presumably, reviewing a video comes with certain responsibilities – watching the film being the first. So I accept full responsibility for not taking the responsibility to fulfill my reviewing responsibilities.

But you might forgive me if you hear me out: I popped in Something Weird's release of Bava's film and was treated to a dark, grainy, washed-out tape. That combined with the stuffy, European setting from some era long before I was born, they might as well have injected novocaine directly into my heart. I was 20 minutes into it before enough was enough.

With all the efforts being made to restore and remaster films of this region and era in the DVD world, it seems almost ridiculous for Something Weird to even bother carrying this title in this condition. I'm one of Something Weird's biggest fans. And exploitation films released in this condition is one thing; it adds to their seediness. But a film like this that requires your undivided, undistracted attention, is done a complete disservice. By the way, those 20 minutes were only mildly interesting, but you might do better with the DVD, available from VCI. *–RY*

Big Bust Loops: Vol. 15
(1994)
Something Weird Video
★★★☆☆

I've never been a big bust kinda guy. In fact, boobs in general are kinda the *hors d'oeuvres* of the sexual world, if you'll pardon my candidness. So for me, watching a tape like this is like stuffing myself with appetizers before the main course arrives. It's not really tease – just non-stop boobs. But *Big Busts* are big business for Something Weird, so different strokes for different folks' strokes, I suppose.

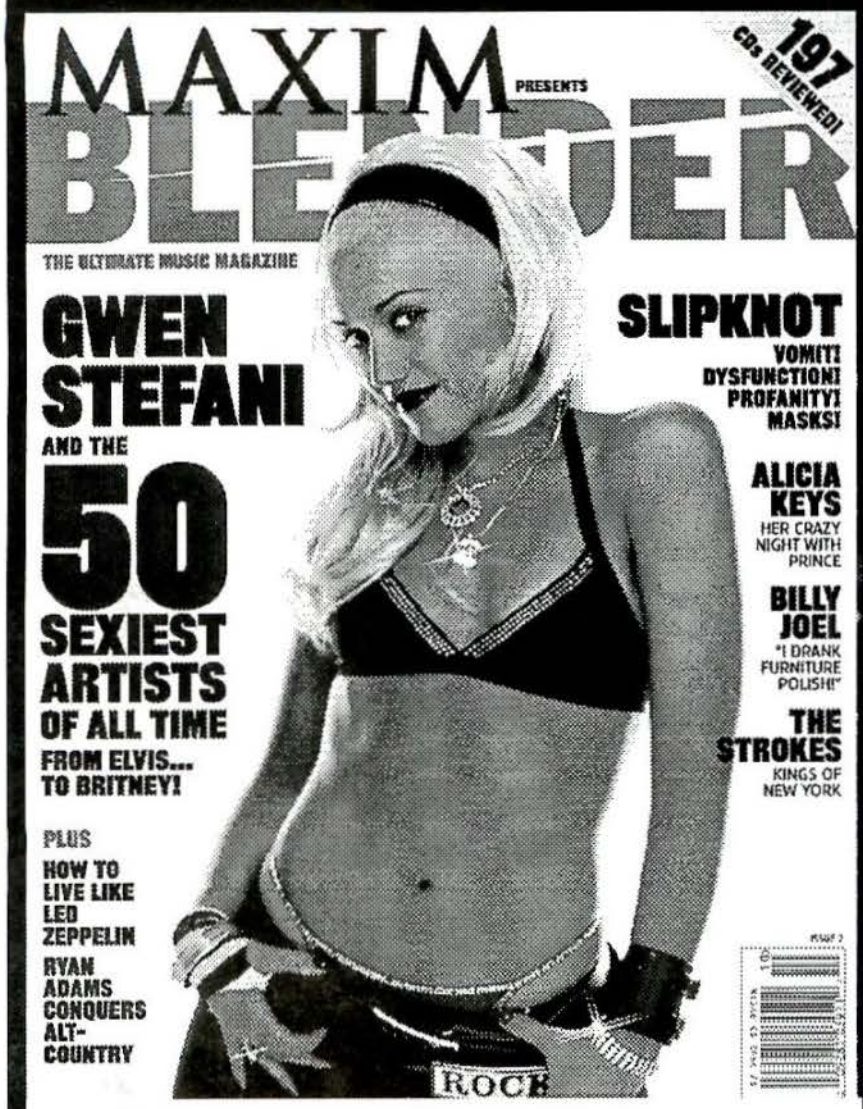
In *Vol. 15*, we are treated to a few legends right off the bat – Kitten Natividad, Uschi Digart and Candy Samples – separately massaging and swaying their mighty money-makers in some fairly explicit color loops for your enjoyment. Intercut are some older black-and-white loops in which big-haired women display their wobbling wares while coyly obscuring their nether bits.

I've seen several of these *Big Bust Loops* tapes (hey, just because I'm not a boob man doesn't mean I don't like to sneak a peek) and this is one of the more rewarding installments. *–RY* H

HARRISON 4-YEAR-OLD MOVIE CRITIC

The Goonies
(1985)
Warner Home Video
★★☆☆☆

Hey, hey, where are the Goonies? Where are the Goonies, Daddy? I want to see the Goonies! Where are they? No, those aren't the Goonies; those are little kids! Daddy, they are kids, not Goonies. That one looks like Jackie Chan. But I thought there were going to be Goonies, like monsters. *Nooooo-oh...* Hey, he's a monster! He has a Superman shirt on like me! I don't want to watch this anymore.

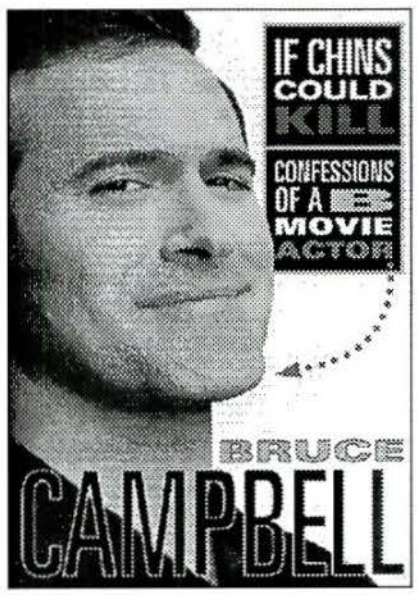


corporate swill

Blender
(Dennis Publishing)

I haven't read *Rolling Stone* in years. It's been about a year for *Spin*, too. Can't say I ever touched a *Vibe*. And if you told me the blokes behind semi-annoying man rag *Maxim* were capable of putting out the best mainstream music magazine around, I'd have thought you were crazy. But then came *Blender* earlier this year. It's not "the ultimate music magazine" as the cover so proudly boasts, but it's pretty darned good for something I expected to be so bad. I think the credit goes to editor Andy Pemberton, who was hired away from the British music monthly *Q* to take the helm here. *Q* – along with a few other UK monthlies – is always a great read, because their coverage is so much better, often championing the little guys over this week's pop tart. Judging from its covers thus far – Janet Jackson, Gwen Stefani and DMX – *Blender* still has a ways to go in that department, but the contents inside reveal a broader scope, with features on as-yet-non-household names like ex-Whiskeytowner Ryan Adams. When ludicrous acts like Slipknot are covered, at least they're done so with a sly sense of humor (but thankfully largely devoid of the smarmy, "my penis is erect" style of alleged humor that pervades its sister *Maxim*). The *Q* influence is most evident in its extensive CD review section, covering approximately 200 discs and discriminating against no genre or level of commercial viability. You'll find chart-toppers reviewed alongside never-wills, and in that regard, it's downright refreshing. *–RL*

books

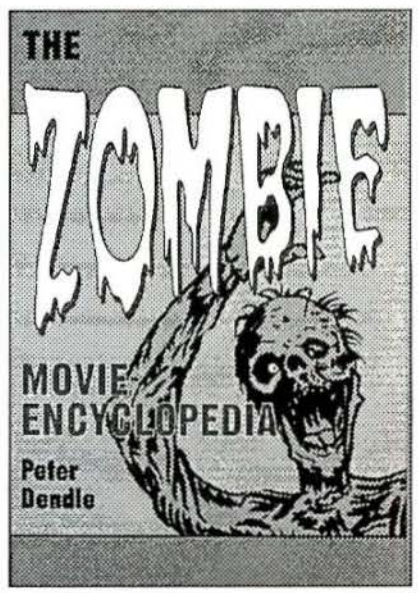


If Chins Could Kill: Confessions of a B-Movie Actor
By Bruce Campbell
(St. Martin's)

It's likely Bruce Campbell will never be rewarded for his acting, but he has something most actors don't: charisma to burn. He seems like such a helluva nice guy, a rep that was only strengthened after reading his autobiography. Heck, he's so nice that when he dishes dirty gossip, he doesn't even name names! It's mighty comforting to learn that even with his successes, he remains humble – even having to take a security job following *Evil Dead 2*. Writing at a brisk, almost conversational pace, Bruce details his childhood (which provides the book with some of its funniest moments), his near-accidental stumble into acting and his slow climb up the Hollywood ladder, with the highs (*The Hudsucker Proxy*), lows (*Moontrap*) and even lower lows (*Crimewave*). His on-set tales of the ill-fated *McHale's Navy* movie pretty much sum up all that's wrong with Tinseltown these days, and thank God he has the balls to tell it. Hell, thank God for Bruce Campbell. The movies – and the world – need more people like him. *–RL*

The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia
By Peter Dendle
(McFarland)
www.mcfarlandpub.com

More than 200 flicks of the undead are reviewed (alphabetically, of course) in this mostly comprehensive reference work. All the usual suspects are here – namely,



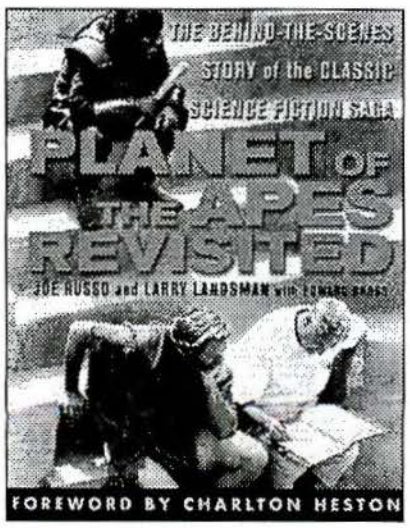
READING KICKS ASS!

Long-time HITCH readers will remember when we reviewed all kinds of printed material. That ended when Rod got tired of getting crappy zines to review. Now that the "zine movement" has died off and those losers have gone on to making crappy websites, we have decided that it's once again safe to review stuff to read. And as with the other sections, we will review everything we receive. So if you've got something you'd like to get reviewed in HITCH, send it to HITCH Print, P.O. Box 21141, Oklahoma City, OK 73156. (This is only the address for Print.)

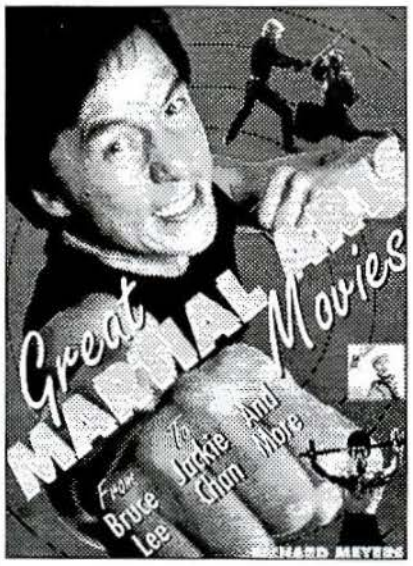
the works of Romero, Fulci and the like. As Dendle positions and proves time and again, *Night of the Living Dead* remains the most influential zombie movie ever, and covers all its sequels, spin-offs, imitators and even parodies. Though one doesn't think of *Re-Animator* or *Heavy Metal* as zombie movies, the fact that they have zombies in them (even for a minute) qualifies them for inclusion, and you have to respect that reach. Although Dendle's book works best as reference (rather than a cover-to-cover read, thanks to occasional dryness), you'll find yourself stumbling across several interesting titles to arouse your curiosity, like *Erotic Nights of the Living Dead*, *I Was a Zombie for the FBI* and *Dr. Satan vs. Black Magic*. Dendle does a fine job of not only reviewing each title, but spelling out the characteristics for the zombies in each work. While there are notable omissions (where's *Carnival of Souls*?), so many foreign, oldie and obscure items are included that is breadth is impressive. –*RL*

Planet of the Apes Revisited
By Joe Russo and Larry Landsman with Edward Gross
(St. Martin's)

I literally have waited for this book for years. Back in 1994, I had sent my check in for a copy; it was never cashed, as the title was canceled and shopped around from


THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES
STORY of the CLASSIC
SCIENCE FICTION SAGA
PLANET OF THE APES REVISITED
JOE RUSSO and LARRY LANDSMAN with EDWARD GROSS
FOREWORD BY CHARLTON HESTON

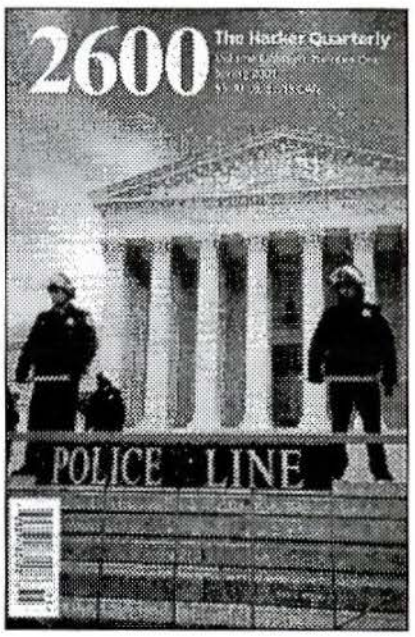
house to house before finding a home to St. Martin's, thanks to renewed interest in the series (likely granted by Tim Burton's new version). Overall, it was the worth the wait, with the authors *exhaustively* covering each movie in the five-film series, with exclusive insights from the creative parties involved. The TV series and cartoon show also are discussed to good effect, but the chapter on Burton's 2001 *Planet* just reads like tacked-on PR fluff. The boys' approach occasionally reads fan-boyish, but not to an extreme that ruins their credibility or your enjoyment. I thought that having seen the excellent *Behind the Planet of the Apes* documentary, I might have learned all there is to know, but the book reveals plenty more, from Kim Hunter's claustrophobic reaction to the makeup to the odd choice who almost directed the landmark classic original: Blake Edwards!?! –*RL*



Great Martial Arts Movies: From Bruce Lee to Jackie Chan and More
By Richard Meyers
(Citadel)

The notoriously chintzy Citadel Press has published loads of crap over the years that litter the entertainment section. To my knowledge, they've printed exactly three books worth sitting on any film buff's shelf: *Classics of the Horror Film* from 1974, *The Films of Vincent Price* a couple years back and now this one, covering the world of kung-fu cinema. Its subtitle pretty much says it all, with healthy chapters dedicated to those two giants of the genre. Most of the book is spent covering the Chan era and his cohorts, including Michelle Yeoh, Sammo Hung and Chow Yun-Fat, and it is this and the chapter covering the old-school Shaw Brothers flicks that are the most interesting. To be fair, Japan's samurai and swordsmen pics merit a section, too, as does America's feeble attempts at martial arts movies, what with all the worthless Jean-Claude Van Damme, Steven Seagal and Chuck Norris vehicles floating around. Once he mentions Cannon's *Ninja* films and the Ninja Turtles, one starts to feel embarrassed for the ol' red, white and blue. Can't we do better? Lavishly illustrated with lots of stills and ad mats, Meyers' book is clearly authoritative, if a bit biased. Though I wish someone would do a comprehensive *Psychotronic*-type review guide for the kung-fu film, this book really captures the spirit of what makes them so much fun. –*RL*

zines



***2600: The Hacker Quarterly* #18-1**
P.O. Box 752
Middle Island, NY 11953-0752
$5

I don't understand 95 percent of this popular zine, but I don't hate 95 percent of it, either. I'm fascinated by math and science and technology – and the merger of all three, even when legally questionable – so I don't mind reading about (okay, grazing over) Windows script encoders or quantum interference, partly because the accompanying charts and graphs are so damned cool. There's something about a string of digits that's just pleasing to the eye. The article I enjoyed the most was – not surprisingly, on everyone's level of intellect – an examination of the inaccuracies in Miramax's hacker-thriller *Takedown*, starring Skeet Ulrich and Russell Wong, and as yet unreleased in the States (probably because anything from the director of *Halloween 6* can't be too releaseable). I also liked the back-page photo montage of "strange-looking foreign phones." –*RL*

***Cageliner* #2**
P.O. Box 701493
Dallas, TX 75370

Cageliner is an oddball music zine that's distributed freely in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. The layout and writing are pretty basic, but there's a freewheeling spirit that shows some potential. The expected music review secitons and band interviews are complemented by things like an advice column from a Mexican wrestler, the rantings of a semi-literate devil worshipper, lots of booby-flashing women and a rubber chicken mascot. This issue includes interviews with The Filthy Skanks, Fall (The Season) and Pimpadelic.

***Food Geek* #3**
P.O. Box 481051
Los Angeles, CA 90048
$1

What a great idea for a zine! Edited by Carrie McNinch (*Assassin and the Whiner*), *Food Geek* is all about obsessions with food. The zine combines comic strips and text pieces to bring its readers recipes, food recommendations and interesting stories of gluttony, food allergies and other culinary hijinks. While there are plenty of Carrie's excellent writings and comic strips on display, the issue is rounded out with contributions from several other well-known cartoonists and zinesters. Among the highlights are Shaw Granton's tomato sandwich recipe, Anne Thalmeir's "éclair eulogy" and Eric Lyden's "Adventures in the Supermarket Express Line." If you like food – and who doesn't? – give *Food Geek* a read. Highly recommended.

***Giant Robot* #22**
P.O. Box 642053
Los Angeles, CA 90064
$4.95

Giant Robot is about as slick as they comes these days. It's almost hard to remember that it started out as a little digest-sized zine. Despite its transformation into a glossy, sharply designed, four-color publication, *Giant Robot* stays true to its roots and is still an edgy mag that reflect the quirks and obsessions of its creators. In case you are unfamiliar with *Giant Robot*, the focus is on Asian pop culture. This issue features the usual assortment of Asian artists (Aya Takano), stars (Jackie Chan, Beat Takeshi) and filmmakers (Tsui Hark), but also delves into more obscure topics, like Cambodian barber shop signs, the temples at Angkor Wat and a super-freaky article on the walled city of Kowloon. And don't worry, there are tons of music, print and anime reviews. This issue is jam-packed and well worth the cover price.

***Too Much Coffee Man* #11**
P.O. Box 14549
Portland, OR 97293
$4.95

Shannon Wheeler is pretty well known for his character, Too Much Coffee Man. He's published his adventures in comic-book form for several years. With this issue, Wheeler has radically transformed his publication into a magazine geared toward coffeehouse culture. There are still 19 pages of comics, but they are complemented by a selection of humorous articles, which vary in quality and cover topics like coffee-flavored ice cream, prison survival tips and Kieron Dwyer's legal struggles with Starbucks. There are also reviews of comics, music and toys. The combination of short text pieces, cartoony illustrations and lightweight subject matter would make for pretty good coffeehouse reading. I think Wheeler is on to something here. I would encourage other comics publishers to pay close attention to this publication.

***The Timelike Ad Sheet* #4**
P.O. Box 02222
Detroit, MI 48202-9998
free

Um ... I really don't know what this is. The subtitle says it's a book of "ads, promos and other such whatnots." Yup, it's a bunch of ads. But toward the back, the author talks about how full of censorship the small-press *Star Trek* fanzine *Trek Talk* is because they wouldn't let him run a column about *Space: 1999*. I'll take his word for it. *–LF*

A Reader's Guide to the Underground Press
P.O. Box 330156
Murfreesboro, TN 37133-0156
$4

ARGTTUP – formerly *Zine World* – has a new address and a greatly expanded news section, but other than that, it continues to carve out its niche as *the* definitive source for zine reviews. *ARGTTUP* boasts a large staff of reviewers, and they bring a nice variety of opinions and writing styles to the publication. The quality is high all around. If you're interested in zines, this is a must-read. Highly recommended.

***Revolution 21* #2**
revolution_21@hotmail.com
$2

Revolution 21 bills itself as "the independent film and theatre magazine." Unfortunately, it's not very interesting. And for something that prides itself on being independent, reviewing Disney's megabucks *The Lion King* Broadway show strikes me as anything but (excerpt: "This young man will have a bright future in theater should he pursue it. Although he has a slight tendency to ham it up, he does a great job as the young Simba."). There's also a collection of dumb laws (I hate those), Hong Kong video reviews and a stupid Kevin Spacey stalker's diary. After *K-PAX* and that ridiculous John Lennon tribute performance, who in the hell would want to stalk Kevin Spacey? *–RL*

***The Continental* #8**
P.O. Box 4336
Bellingham, WA 98227-4336
$4.95

Music zines are not the most beloved, but that largely may be due the fact that very few like the music they cover. But *The Continental* should have no such problem, since anyone with even a passing interest in surf-rock is sure to be entertained. This issue features interviews with the legendary Trashmen ("Surfin' Bird"), Eddie Angel of the masked Los Straitjackets and the Japanese band The Neatbeats. There's also a staggering amount of music reviews, and to help you get in the mood, it comes with a nifty, 27-track CD featuring The Phantom Surfers, Mystery Action, The Space Coassacks and more. The zine's semi-polished, from-the-heart approach is welcome and impressive. *–RL* H

disc dish

◀◀ 39 released a new album. "Hell Above Water" kicks things off with a dense, hard-rocking guitar riff melted into an industrial drum beat. Imagine Depeche Mode playing Metallica and you're almost there. "Want More Need Less" continues the heavy riffing (this time with My Bloody Valentine guitarist Kevin Shields sitting in), but trades the dance beat for an alternative-rock pop groove. Curve has been at this for 10 years – and although on first listen, you might think the band is following contemporary trends, they are, if anything, one that spearheaded the "modern rock" genre. Hypnotic stuff that deserves attention. *–PT*

Aereogramme
A Story in White
(Matador)

Cross British indie-rock with snappy, rapid-fire bits of drum-and-bass and the occasional crunch of heavy metal and you have Aereogramme. While the result is most always interesting, the moments of undeniable beauty can be hampered by the sudden explosion of angry, throaty screams (for proof, see "Post-Tour, Pre-Judgment"). Matador has smartly supplemented the release with all the tracks from the *White Paw* import EP.

Electro Lounge:
Volume Two
(The Right Stuff)

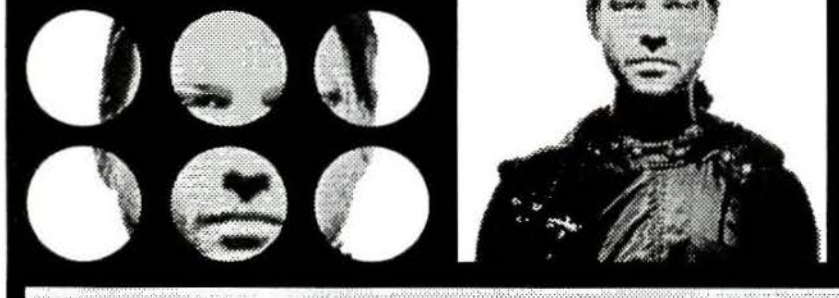
After an on-and-off affair with the release schedule for more than a year, we have the long-overdue sequel to 1999's *Electro Lounge*. It begins with Bond, James Bond – Mark Sinclair's remix of the suave "Dr. No's Fantasy," before tripping into P'tahh's heavenly take on Howard Roberts' "Triste." If you thought Julie London couldn't get any sexier, wait until you hear what the The Rip-Off Artist does with a playful double dose of "Come on-a My House" and "Hot Toddy." TV theme fans will find pleasure in Lunatic Calm's remix of the *I Spy* theme and Champagne Charlie's relentless big-beat reworking of *The Mod Squad*. Two tracks stand out as most intoxicating, though: Justin Robertson's remix of Martin Denny's famous "Quiet Village" and the moody and lusty "Smoke Get in Your Eyes," performed with precision by The Mallet Men but smoothed over with a touch of otherworldly spookiness by Banco De Gaia. You'll get blasted on the results.

Sonorous Music
States of Sleeplessness
(DamagedHearing)

This wonderfully drowsy album is slow, sultry trip-hop – music for the bedroom made entirely by a guy *in* his bedroom. Each cut exudes serious smokiness and determinedly downtempo moodiness. The overall result is heady, as well as mightily impressive for a one-man project. For more info, head to *sonorousmusic.net*. H

Q+A

with Aphex Twin



Richard D. James – aka Aphex Twin – returns from exile with a double CD and a whole lotta bizarre answers to stupid questions. Drukgs *is available now from Warp/Sire/Warner Bros.*

Why Drukqs*?*
James: It's up to everyone to make their own interpretation.

So rumors of your retirement were greatly exaggerated?
James: The old mind was getting really slow and dull, so I thought I'd get a new one.

What have you been doing since Windowlicker *was released?*
James: Playing around with human embryos that myself and my girlfriend made, before it's illegal.

The tracks have very bizarre titles. What do they mean?
James: kwrejgwekrjhwegkwegrk-werjbg

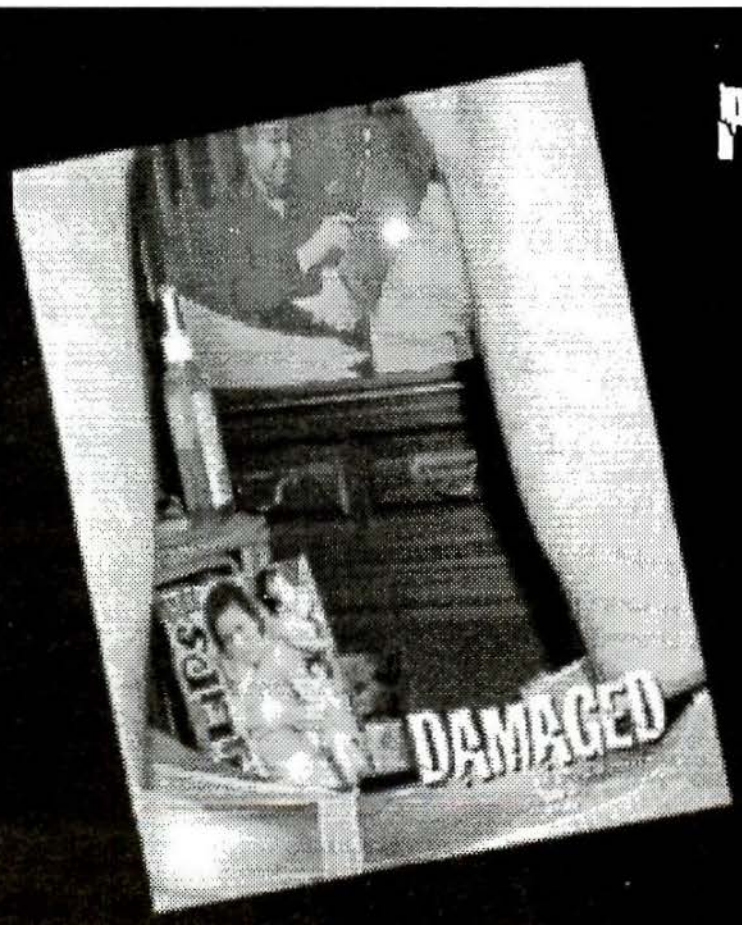
Did you work with anyone else on this album?
James: Yeah, I adopted three goats on my farm in Scotland and taught them how to write music. I upgraded one of the goats at the end of '98 with a hoof mod and it's fucking serious man/woman.

Napster – do you have an opinion on that?
James: I actually wrote the code for the precursor to Napster and that bloke knicked it off me. I'm not bitter, though; I've managed to download my entire catalogue off it when it worked. Saved myself money.

Do you remember life before the Internet?
James: I haven't actually gone online yet. Is it any good? Who are you anyway?

What's your favorite gadget?
James: Oh, it would have to be this endoscope I got. It can go inside your brain via your nostrils and tickle different regions of your body automatically. It's got a USB connection and came bundled with some Mac software. It's so cool, man.

What criteria do you have for releasing someone's records?
James: Well, it's usually based on sexual favors. Best not to go there.



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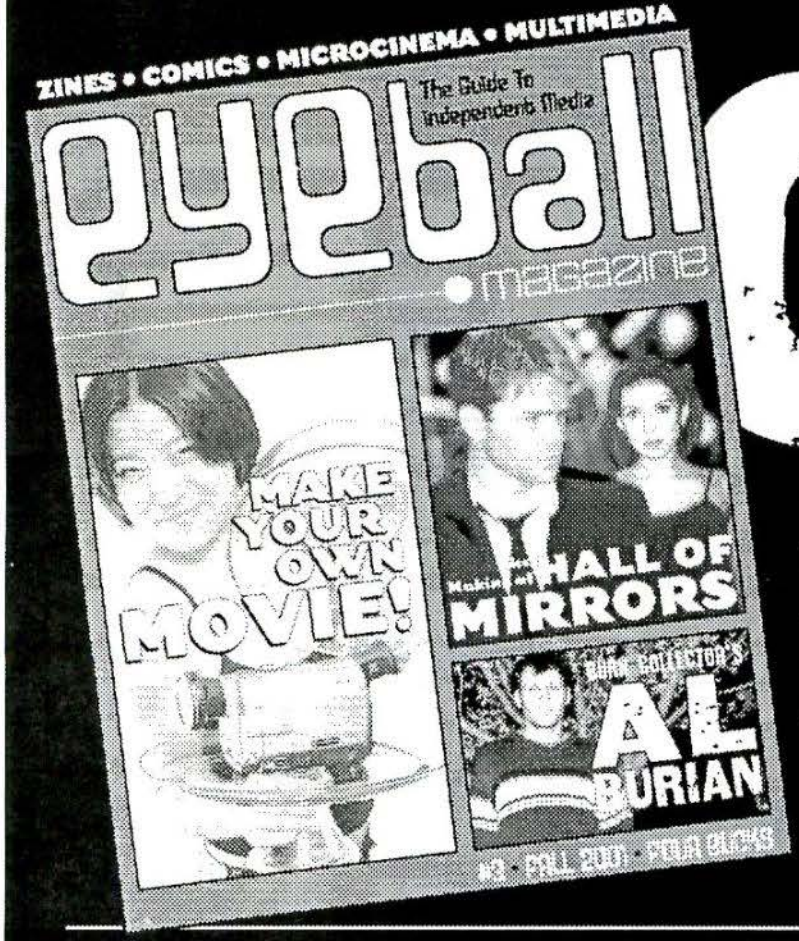

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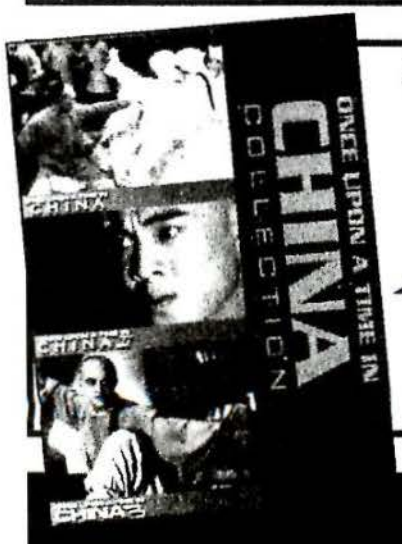
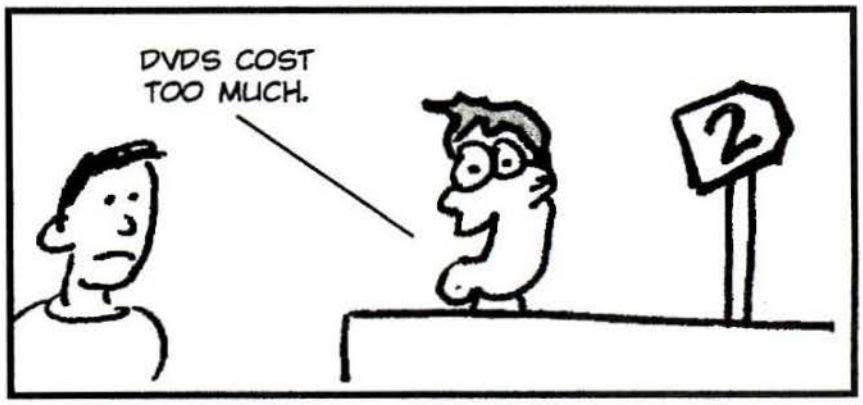
HITCH COMICS

REAL LIFE ADVENTURES of the BEST BUY® TROLL

IN THE OKC METRO AREA, THERE EXISTS A ***FRIENDLY TROLL*** EMPLOYED BY ***BEST BUY***. HE LIVES NOT UNDER THE PREMISES, BUT AT THE CHECKOUT -- ALWAYS SMILING, ALWAYS JOVIAL, ALWAYS ROUND. THE SITUATIONS PRESENTED HERE ARE ***REAL***; DIALOGUE WAS UTTERED BY THE JOLLY, OVERENTHUSIASTIC ***RED-HEADED CREATURE.***



ROD DOES NOT RESPOND. THERE IS AWKWARD SILENCE.



LEAVE IT TO JESUS!

GUEST-STARRING '80S HEARTTHROB, ADRIAN ZMED!

1:00PM
AMC
MOVIE
MEGAPLEX

ONE FOR 'PEARL HARBOR' PLEASE.

UM, AND I'M A STUDENT. SO I GET THE STUDENT DISCOUNT.

YOU SURE THIS IS YOU?

OH YEAH. I LOST SOME WEIGHT AND GREW THE BEARD AND ALL. THAT'S MY FRESHMAN PICTURE. I'M, AH, WORKING ON MY MASTERS' NOW.

2:30PM
SCREEN 43:
"PEARL HARBOR"

HM. THAT LOOKS LIKE TED MCGINLEY.

WOW! THAT IS TED MCGINLEY!

HEY! SHUT UP BACK THERE!

YOU SHUT UP.

6:00PM
JESUS' APARTMENT

YO, Z-MAN. IT'S J.C. HOW'S IT HANGIN'?

LEAN AND MEAN, J-DOG. LEAN AND MEAN.

I RENTED SOME MOVIES. "K-911" STARRING JIM BELUSHI. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THEY MADE A SEQUEL TO "K-9." ON THE BOX IT SAYS IT CAME OUT IN 1999. I GUESS IT WENT STRAIGHT TO VIDEO.

MM-HM?

I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT IT 'TIL I SAW IT IN THE BEST BUY CIRCULAR.

6:55PM
JESUS' APARTMENT

SO I'VE BEEN LISTENING TO STEELY DAN, BUT I USED TO HATE STEELY DAN. I THINK IT MEANS I'M GETTING OLD.

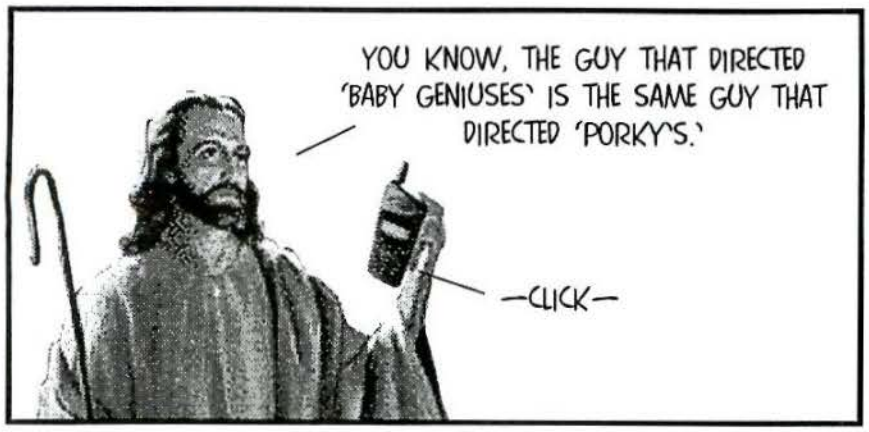
UH-HUH. HM.

I USED TO THINK IT WAS ALL EASY LISTENING, SMOOTH JAZZ CRAP, BUT IT'S REALLY GOOD. AND, YOU KNOW, THAT SONG "FM," I USED TO THINK IT WAS CALLED "NO STATIC AT ALL."

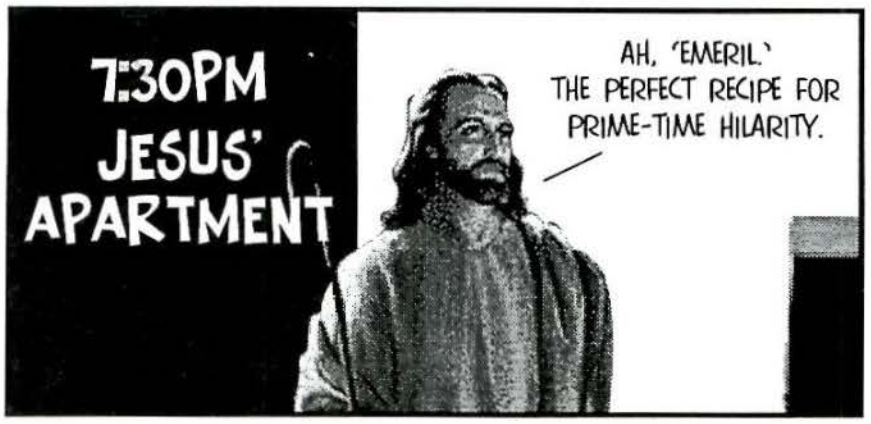
YEAH?

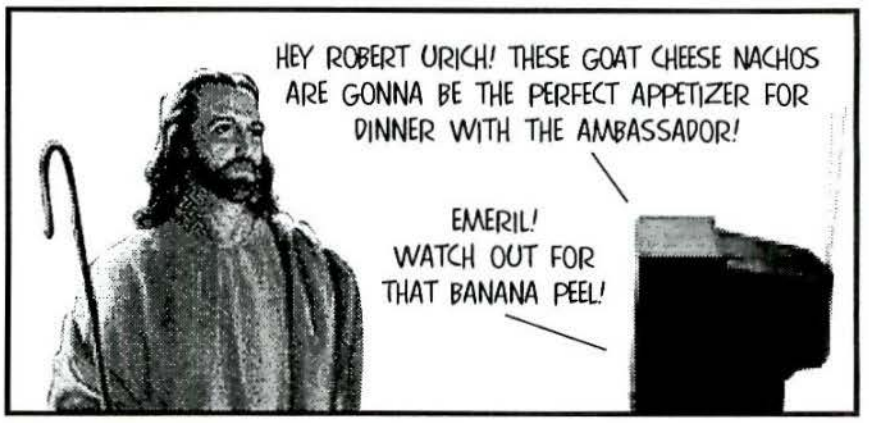
PLUS, I THOUGHT IT WAS THE DOOBIE BROTHERS.

LISTEN, J-DOG, I, AH, I GOTTA RUN... 'BABY GENIUSES' IS ON STARZ AT SEVEN.


YOU KNOW, THE GUY THAT DIRECTED 'BABY GENIUSES' IS THE SAME GUY THAT DIRECTED 'PORKY'S.'
—CLICK—

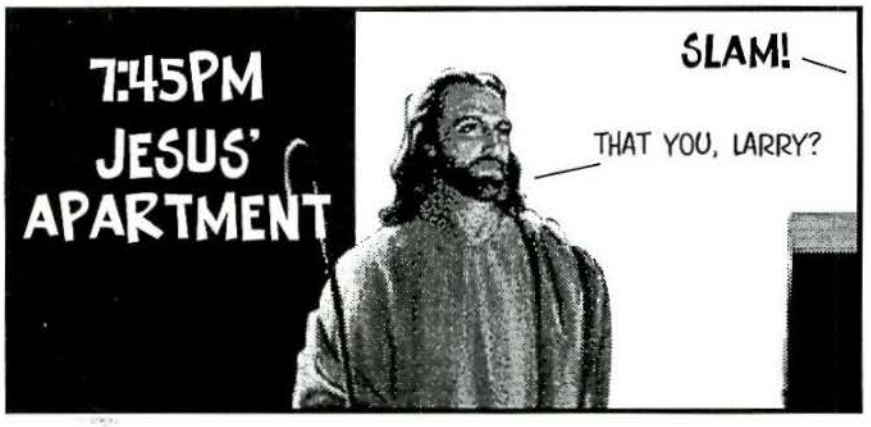
HE ALSO DID 'A CHRISTMAS STORY.'
DOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

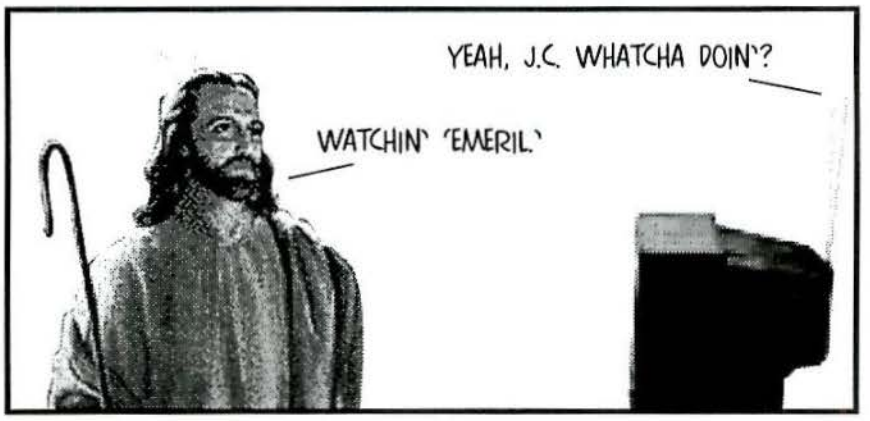

7:30PM
JESUS' APARTMENT
AH, 'EMERIL.' THE PERFECT RECIPE FOR PRIME-TIME HILARITY.

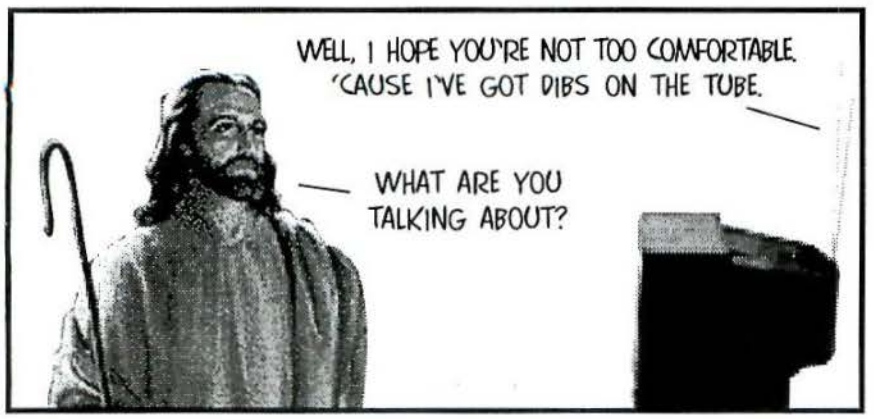

HEY ROBERT URICH! THESE GOAT CHEESE NACHOS ARE GONNA BE THE PERFECT APPETIZER FOR DINNER WITH THE AMBASSADOR!
EMERIL! WATCH OUT FOR THAT BANANA PEEL!

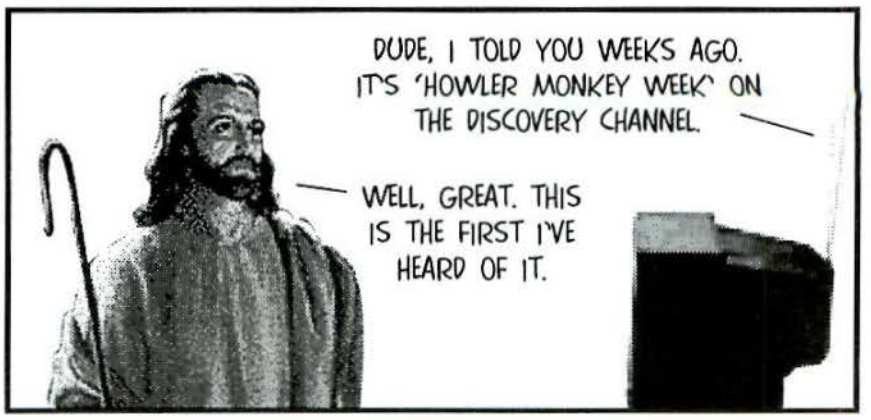
CRASH!
OH NO! THE AMBASSADOR!

MMM... NACHOS.


7:45PM
JESUS' APARTMENT
SLAM!
THAT YOU, LARRY?


YEAH, J.C. WHATCHA DOIN'?
WATCHIN' 'EMERIL.'


WELL, I HOPE YOU'RE NOT TOO COMFORTABLE. 'CAUSE I'VE GOT DIBS ON THE TUBE.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?


DUDE, I TOLD YOU WEEKS AGO. IT'S 'HOWLER MONKEY WEEK' ON THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL.
WELL, GREAT. THIS IS THE FIRST I'VE HEARD OF IT.

I AM LOOKING AT THE NOTE I LEFT ON THE FRIDGE RIGHT NOW. "TUES NITE = MONKEYS ON TV 4 LARRY."

THAT MAKES NO SENSE TO ME. YOU'RE TALKING CRAZY TALK.

DUDE, THERE IS CHEESE ALL OVER THE COUNTER IN HERE. DID YOU MAKE NACHOS AGAIN?

NO... YES.

I HOPE YOU'RE GONNA CLEAN THIS UP SOON. THIS SHIT'S A BITCH WHEN IT GETS HARD.

I'LL DO IT WHEN I FEEL LIKE IT.

C'MON, MAN. YOU CAN WATCH 'EMERIL' ON THE TV IN YOUR ROOM.

IT DOESN'T HAVE CABLE. NBC COMES IN FUZZY.

WHO LET YOU WATCH THE 'BEHIND THE MUSIC' MARATHON LAST WEEKEND, UNINTERRUPTED?

FINE.

AND WHO DEMANDED I NOT CHANGE THE CHANNEL WHEN 'JUST ONE OF THE GUYS' WAS ON FOR THE MILLIONTH TIME?

I SAID FINE!

9:30PM JESUS' ROOM

CRUNCH CRUNCH

DUDE, ARE YOU EATING MY FUNYUNS?

CRUNCH

NO!

OOH-OOH-OOH! AAH! AAH!

CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH

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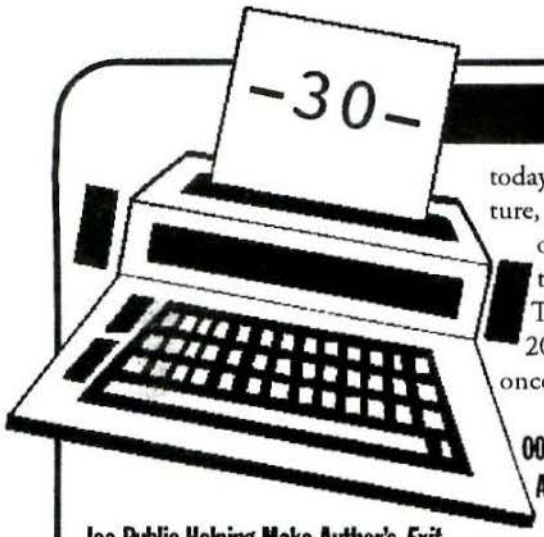
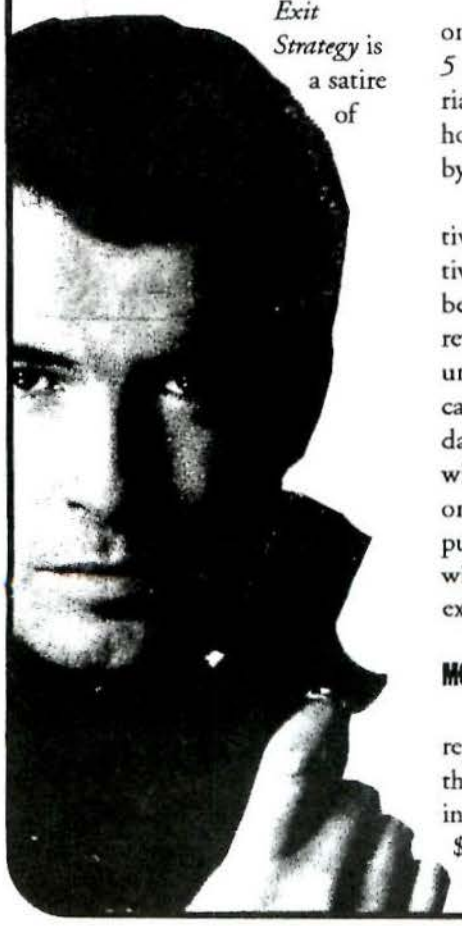


Joe Public Helping Make Author's *Exit*

Author Douglas Rushkoff has begun work on *Exit Strategy*, which he is calling the "first-ever 'open source' novel."

By debuting his work on the website of *Yahoo! Internet Life* (*www.yil.com/rushkoff*) Rushkoff invites the general public to add to his story by contributing original footnotes. He then will include the best 100 footnotes in the final edition of the novel, to be published in both print and electronic formats.

"By opening the footnotes to the world, I'm giving everyone a chance to futurecast – to imagine how things will be different," explained Rushkoff. "Ultimately, the footnotes will become more important than the novel itself."



Exit Strategy is a satire of today's technology-obsessed culture, told from the point of view of a young Jewish hacker-turned-venture-capitalist. The story takes place in 2008, when Silicon Alley has once again turned bullish.

007 to Drive Martin ... Aston Martin

James Bond will drive an Aston Martin again in the next 007 film, due for release in 2002 on the franchise's 40th anniversary.

The new V12 Vanquish will be the fourth Aston Martin that Bond has driven, the first being the ejector-seat-equipped DB5 in 1964's *Goldfinger*.

"When people think of James Bond, the first car they think of is Aston Martin," said Dr. Wolfgang Reitzle, group vice president of Ford Motor Company. "For all of us that love the 007 films, it is great news."

The film will be directed by Lee Tamahori (*Along Came a Spider*, *Once Were Warriors*).

F5 Is Alive!

After a three-year hiatus, the once-mighty zine bible *Factsheet 5* is coming back. A new editorial collective has taken over and hopes to have the first issue out by year's end.

Factsheet 5 is an authoritative guide to zines and alternative publications. Each issue will be packed with hundreds of reviews of independent and unusual publications, and will catalog and review an abundance of zines. Additionally, it will include informative articles on zine culture, independent publishing, columns, interviews with self-publishers and an extensive news section.

MGM: Makin' Good Money

Movie studio MGM has reported 2001 is the largest in the studio's 77-year history, besting its previous record of $370,559,380 in box office in 1982.

MGM's great year began with the $58 million opening of *Hannibal*, which went on to gross $165 million. *Heartbreakers*, *Jeepers Creepers* and *Legally Blonde* also all opened at No. 1, with the latter one of the most profitable domestic releases ever for the studio.

A&C in 3-D

Amsterdam-based recording duo Arling & Cameron have commissioned artist Aristomenis Tsirbas to program virtual versions of themselves in the hope of liberating themselves from some of the more tedious tasks associated with the music industry – namely photo shoots, touring, interviews and writing hit singles.

AC/3D's first "job" was posing as cover models on the new A&C album, *We Are A&C*. In August, the group held a record release party in Amsterdam, but with no music playing.

"By being silent, this exhibition hopes to not only reflect the influence of visuals on how pop music is listened to in general, but also in some strange way, actually act to put the focus purely back on the music," they said.

Enroll in Old School ... Kung Fu!

For the second year in a row, NYC's Subway Cinema is holding a seven-flick Old School Kung Fu Fest on Thursday through Saturdays throughout November and December.

On the program: Sammo Hung's *The Prodigal Son*, the Taiwanese spaghetti western-esque *Mar's Villa*, the creepy serial-killer thriller *Dreadnaught*, the "*Educating Rita* meets *Five Fingers of Death*" girl-fightin' *The Leg Fighters*, the ever-popular *Shogun Assassin* (aka *Lone Wolf and Cub*), the early Jet Li film *Martial Arts of Shaolin*, the whacked-out handicapped classic *Crippled Avengers*, Yuen Woo Ping's *Taoism Drunkard* (featuring "a butt-munching Watermelon Monster" and the infamous Hammer Studio/Shaw Brothers collaboration *The Seven Brothers Meet Dracula*.

As always, for more information, visit *www.subwaycinema.com*. H

Boogeymen Body Counts

- Jason Voorhees (*Friday the 13th*): 191 bodies in nine films
- The Tall Man (*Phantasm*): 79 bodies and one dog in four films
- Michael Myers (*Halloween*): 75 bodies and four dogs in seven films
- Freddy Kruger (*A Nightmare on Elm Street*): 31 bodies in seven films
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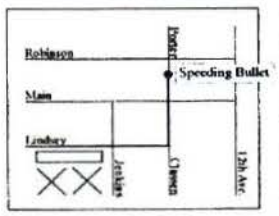

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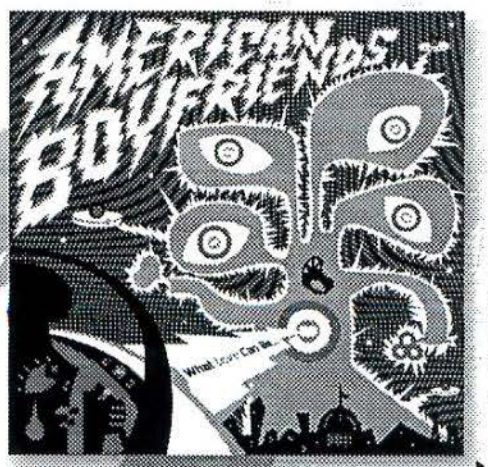

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